Bhakti Yoga

भक्तियोग

Swami Vivekananda

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PRAYER

स तन्मयो ह्यम्टत ईशसंस्थो

ज्ञः सर्गगो भुवनस्यास्य गोप्ता ।

य ईशेऽस्य जगतो नित्यमेव

नान्यो हेतुर्विद्यत ईशनाय ॥

योब्रह्माणं विदधाति पूर्वं

यो वै वेदांश्च प्रहिणोति तस्मै ।

तं ह देवमात्मबुद्धिप्रकाशं

मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणमहं प्रपद्ये ॥

" He is the Soul of the Universe; He is immortal ; His is the Rulership; He is the All-knowing, the All-pervading the Protector of the Universe, the Eternal Ruler. None else is there efficient to govern the world eternally.

" He who at the beginning of creation projected Brahma (i.e. the universal consciousness), and who delivered the Vedas unto him—seeking liberation I go for refuge unto that Effulgent One, whose light turns the understanding towards the Âtman."

—*Shwetâshwatara-Upanishad*, VI 17, 18.

DEFINITION OF BHAKTI

BHAKTI-YOGA is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing, and ending in Love. One single moment of the madness of extreme love to God brings us eternal freedom. "Bhakti," says Nârada in his explanation of the Bhakti-aphorisms, "is intense love to God."—"When a man gets it, he loves all, hates none; he becomes satisfied for ever."—"This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit," because so long as worldly desires last, that kind of love does not come. "Bhakti is greater than Karma, greater than Yoga, because these are intended for an object in view, while Bhakti is its own fruition, its own means, and its own end."

Bhakti has been the one constant theme of our sages. Apart from the special writers on Bhakti, such as Shândilya or Nârada, the great commentators on the *Vyâsa-Sutras,* evidently advocates of Knowledge (Jnâna), have also something very suggestive to say about Love. Even when the commentator is anxious to explain many, if not all, of the texts so as to make them import a sort of dry knowledge, the Sutras, in the chapter on worship especially, do not lend themselves to be easily manipulated in that fashion.

There is not really so much difference between Knowledge (Jnana) and Love (Bhakti) as people sometimes imagine. We shall see as we go on, that in the end they converge and meet at the same point. So also is it with Raja-Yoga, which, when pursued as a means to attain liberation,

and not (as unfortunately it frequently becomes in the hands of charlatans and mystery-mongers) as an instrument to hoodwink the unwary, leads us also to the same goal.

The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest, and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view; its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical crew in Hinduism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity, have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment (Nishthâ) to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal, *i.e*. by hating every other ideal. Herein is the explanation of why the same man who is so lovingly attached to his own ideal of God, so devoted to his own ideal of religion, becomes a howling fanatic as soon as he sees or hears anything of any other ideal. This kind of love is somewhat like the canine instinct of guarding the master's property from intrusion; only, the instinct of the dog is better than the reason of man, for the dog never mistakes its master for an enemy in whatever dress he may come before it. Again, the fanatic loses all power of judgement. Personal considerations are in his case of such absorbing interest that to him it is no right or wrong; but the one thing he is always particularly careful to know is, who says it. The same man who is kind, good, honest, and loving to people of his own opinion, will not hesitate to do the vilest

deeds, when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood.

But this danger exists only in that stage of Bhakti called *the preparatory* (गौणी), When Bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is caned the *supreme* (परा), no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism; that soul which is overpowered by this higher form of Bhakti is too near the God of Love to become an instrument for the diffusion of hatred.

It is not given to all of us to be harmonious in the building up of our characters in this life: yet we know that that character is of the noblest type in which all these three—knowledge and love and Yoga—are harmoniously fused. Three things are necessary for a bird to fly—the two wings and the tail as a rudder for steering. Jnâna (knowledge) is the one wing, Bhakti (love) is tc the other, and Yoga is the tail that keeps up the balance. For those who cannot pursue all these three forms of worship together in harmony, and take up, therefore, Bhakti alone as their way, it is necessary always to remember that forms and ceremonials, though absolutely necessary for the progressive soul, have no other value than taking us on to that state in which we feel the most intense love to God.

There is a little difference in opinion between the teachers of knowledge and those of love, though both admit the power of Bhakti. The Jnânis hold Bhakti to be an instrument of liberation; the Bhaktas (devotees) look upon it both as the instrument and the thing to be attained. To my mind this is a distinction without much difference. In fact, Bhakti, when used as an instrument, really means a lower

form of worship, and the higher form becomes inseparable from the lower form of realisation at a later stage. Each seems to lay a great stress upon his own peculiar method of worship, forgetting that with perfect love true knowledge is bound to come even unsought, and that from perfect knowledge true love is inseparable.

Bearing this in mind, let us try to understand what the great Vedantic commentators have to say on the subject. In explaining the Sutra आवृत्तिरसकृदुपदेशात् (Âvrittirasakridupadeshat), Bhagavan Shankara says, "Thus people say, 'He is devoted to the king, he is devoted to the Guru'; they say this of him who follows his Guru, and does so, having that following as the one end in view. Similarly they say, 'The loving wife meditates on her loving husband'; here also a kind of eager and, continuous remembrance is meant." This is devotion according to Shankara.

Meditation again is a constant remembrance (of the thing meditated upon), flowing like an unbroken stream of oil poured out from one vessel to another. When this kind of remembering has been attained (in relation to God) all bondages break. Thus it is spoken of in the scriptures regarding constant remembering as a means to liberation. This remembering again is of the same form as seeing, because it is of the same meaning as in the passage, 'When He who is far and near is seen, the bonds of the heart are broken, all doubts vanish, and all effects of work disappear.' He who is near can be seen, but he who is far can only be remembered. Nevertheless, the scripture says that we have to *see* Him who is near as well as Him who is far, thereby tion, indicating to us that the above kind of *remembering* is

as good as seeing. This remembrance when exalted assumes the same form as seeing. Worship is constant remembering as may be seen from the essential texts of scriptures. Knowing, which is the same as repeated worship, has been described as constant remembering. . . . Thus the memory, which has attained to the height of what is as good as direct perception, is spoken of in the Shruti as a means of liberation. 'This Âtman is not to be reached through various sciences, nor by intellect, nor by much study of the Vedas. Whomsoever this Âtman desires, by him is the Âtman attained, unto him this Âtman discovers Himself.' Here, after saying that mere hearing, thinking, and meditating are not the the means of attaining this Âtman, it is said, 'Whom this Âtman desires, by him the Âtman is attained.' The extremely beloved is desired; by whomsoever this Âtman is extremely beloved; he becomes the most beloved of the Âtman. So that this beloved may attain the Âtman, the Lord Himself helps. For it has been said by the Lord: 'Those who are constantly attached to Me and worship Me with love—I give that direction to their will by which they come to Me.' Therefore it is said that, to whomsoever this remember ing, which is of the same form as direct perception, is very dear, because it is dear to the Object of such memory-perception, he is desired by the Supreme Âtman, by him the Supreme Âtman is attained. This constant remembrance is denoted by the word Bhakti." So says Bhagavân Râmânuja in his commentary on the Sutra अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा.

In commenting on the Sutra of Patanjali, ईशरश्वरप्रणिधानाहा— i.e. 'Or by the worship of the Supreme Lord,' Bhoja says, "Pranidhâna is that sort of Bhakti in which, without seeking results, such as sense-enjoyments, etc., all works are dedicated to that Teacher of teachers." Bhagavan Vyâsa also, when commenting on the same, defines Pranidhâna as "the form of Bhakti by which the mercy of the Supreme Lord comes to the Yogi and blesses him by granting him his desires." According to Shandilya, "Bhakti is intense love to God." The best definition is, however, that given by the king of Bhaktas, Prahlâda:

या प्रीतिरविवेकानां विषयेप्वनपाधिनी ।

त्वामुस्मरतः सा मे हृदयान्मापसर्पतु ॥

—"That deathless love which the ignorant have for the fleeting objects of the senses—as I keep meditating on Thee—may not that (sort of intense) love (for Thee) slip away from my heart!" Love! For whom? For the Supreme Lord Ishwara. Love for any other being, how ever great, cannot be Bhakti; for, as Ramanuja says in his *Shri-Bhâshya* quoting an ancient Âchârya, i.e. a great teacher :

आब्रह्मरतम्बपर्घन्ताः जगदन्तर्व्यवस्थिताः ।

प्राणिनः कर्मजनितसंसारवशवर्तिनः ॥

यतस्ततो न ते ध्घाने ध्यानिनामुपकारकाः ।

ाविद्यान्तर्गताः सर्वे ते हि संसारगोच्चराः ॥

—"From *Brahmâ* to a clump of grass, all things that live in the world are slaves of birth and death caused by Karma; therefore they cannot be helpful as objects of meditation, because they are all in ignorance and subject to change." In

commenting on the word Anurakti (अनुरक्ति) used by Shandilya, the commentator Swapneshwara says that it means Anu (अनु) after, and Rakti (रक्ति) attachment; i.e. the attachment, which comes of. after the knowledge of the nature and glory of God; else a blind attachment to anyone, *e.g.* to wife or children would be Bhakti. We plainly see, therefore, that Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realisation beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishwara.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ISHWARA

Who is Ishwara ? जन्माद्यस्य यतः—"From Whom is the birth, continuation, and dissolution of the universe"—He is Ishwara—"the Eternal, the Pure, the Ever-Free: the Almighty, the All- Knowing, the All-Merciful, the Teacher of all teachers;" and above all, स ईश्वरोऽनिर्वचनीयप्रे मसवढपः—"He the Lord is, of His own nature, inexpressible love."

These certainly are the definitions of a Personal God. Are there then two Gods? The "Not this, Not this," the Sat-chit-ânanda, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, of the philosopher, and this God of Love of the Bhakta? No, it is the same Sat-chit-ananda who is also the God of Love, the impersonal and personal in one. It has always to be understood that the Personal God worshipped by the Bhakta is not separate or different from the Brahman. All is Brahman, the One without a second; only the Brahman, as unity or absolute, is too much of an abstraction to be loved and worshipped; so the Bhakta chooses the relative aspect of Brahman, that is, Ishwara, the Supreme Ruler. To use a simile: Brahman is as the clay or substance out of which an infinite variety of articles are fashioned. As clay, they are all one; but form or manifestation differentiates them. Before everyone of them was made, they all existed potentially in the clay; and, of course, they are identical substantially; but when formed, and so long as the form remains, they are separate and different; the clay-mouse can never become a clay-elephant, because, as manifestations, form alone makes

them what they are, though as unformed clay they are all one. Ishwara is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Reality, or, in other words, the highest possible reading of the Absolute by the human mind. Creation is eternal, and so also is Ishwara.

In the fourth Pâda of the fourth chapter of his Sutras, after stating the almost infinite power for, and knowledge which will come to the liberated the soul after the attainment of Moksha, Vyâsa all makes the remark, in an aphorism, that none, however, will get the power of creating, ruling, and dissolving the universe, because that belongs to God alone. In explaining the Sutra it is easy for the dualistic commentators to show how it is all ever impossible for a subordinate soul, Jiva, to have the infinite power and total independence of God. The thorough dualistic commentator Madhwâchârya deals wIth thIs passage in his usual summary method by quoting a verse from the *Varâha Purâna.*

In explaining this aphorism the commentator Râmânuja says, "This doubt being raised, whether among the powers of the liberated souls is included that unique power of the Supreme One, that is, of creation etc., of the universe and even the Lordship of all, or whether, without that, the glory of the liberated consists only in the direct perception of the Supreme One, we get as an argument the following: It is reasonable that the liberated get the Lordship of the universe, because the scriptures say, 'He attains to extreme sameness with the Supreme One and all his desires are realised.' Now extreme sameness and realisation of all desires cannot be attained without the unique power of the Supreme Lord, namely, that of governing the universe. Therefore, to attain

the realisation of all desires and the extreme sameness with the Supreme, we must all admit that the liberated get the power of ruling the whole universe. To this we reply that the liberated get all the powers except that of ruling the universe. Ruling the universe is guiding the form and the life and the desires of all the sentient and the non-sentient beings. The liberated ones, from whom all that veils His true nature has been removed, only enjoy the unobstructed perception of Brahman, but do not possess the power of ruling the universe. This is proved from the scriptural text, 'From whom all these things are born, by whom all that are born live, unto whom they, departing, return—I ask about It, That is Brahman.' If this quality of ruling the universe be a quality common even to the liberated, then this text would not apply as a definition of Brahma, defining Him through His rulership of the universe. The uncommon attributes alone define a thing; therefore in texts like—'My beloved boy, alone, in the beginning, there existed the One without a second. That saw and felt: "I will give birth to the many." That projected heat;' 'Brahman indeed alone existed in the beginning. That One evolved. That projected a blessed form, the Kshatra. All these gods are Kshatras—Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu, Ishana;' 'Âtman indeed existed alone in the beginning; nothing else vibrated; He thought of projecting the world; He projected the world after;' 'Alone Nârâyana existed; neither Brahmâ nor Ishana, nor the Dyâvâ-Prithivi, nor the stars, nor water, nor fire, nor Soma, nor the Sun. He did not take pleasure alone. He after His meditation had one daughter, the ten organs, *etc.*;' and in others as, 'Who living in the earth is separate from the earth,

who living in the Âtman, etc.'—the Shrutis speak of the Supreme One as the subject of the work of ruling the universe. . . . Nor in these descrip tions of the ruling of the universe is there any position for the liberated soul, by which such a soul may have the ruling of the universe ascribed to it." In explaining the next Sutra, Râmânuja says, "If you say it is not so, because there are direct texts in the Vedas in evidence to the contrary, these texts refer to the glory of the liberated in the spheres of the subordinate deities." This also is an easy solution of the difficulty. Although the system of Râmânuja admits the unity of the total, within that totality of existence there are, according to him, eternal differences. Therefore, for all practical purposes, this system also being dualistic, it was easy for Râmânuja to keep the distinction between the personal soul and the Personal God very clear. We shall now try to understand what the great representative of the Advaita School has to say on the point. We shall see how the Advaita system maintains all the hopes and aspirations of the dualist intact, and at the same time propounds its own solution of the problem, in consonance with the high destiny of divine humanity. Those, who aspire to retain their individual mind even after liberation, and to remain distinct, will have ample opportunity of realising their aspirations and enjoy the blessing of the qualified Brahman. These are they who have been spoken of in the *Bhâgavata Purâna* thus: "O king, such are the glorious qualities of the Lord that the sages whose only pleasure is in the Self, and from whom all fetters have fallen off, even they love the Omnipresent with the love that is for love's sake." These are they who are spoken of by the Sânkhyas as getting merged in

nature in this cycle, so that, after attaining perfection, they may come out in the next as Lords of world-systems. But none of these ever becomes equal to God (lshwara). Those who attain to that state where there is neither creation, nor created, nor creator, where there is neither knower, nor knowable, nor knowledge, where there is neither *I*, nor *thou*, nor *he*, where there is neither subject, nor object, nor relation, "there, who is seen by whom?"—such persons have gone beyond everything, to "where words cannot go nor mind", gone to that which the Shrutis declare as "Not this, Not this"; but for those who cannot, or will not reach this state, there will inevitably remain the triune vision of the one undifferentiated Brahman as nature, soul, and the interpenetrating sustainer of both—Ishwara. So, when Prahlâda forgot himself, he found neither the universe nor its cause; all was to him one Infinite, undifferentiated by name and form; but as soon as he remembered that he was Prahlâda, there was the universe before him and with it the Lord of the universe, "the Repository of an infinite number of blessed qualities." So it was with the blessed Gopis. So long as they had lost sense of their own personal identity and individuality, they were all Krishnas; and when they began again to think of Him as the One to be worshipped, then they were Gopis again, and immediately:

तासामाविरभूच्छौरिः समयमानमुखाम्बुज ।

पौताम्बरधरः स्रग्वी साचान्मन्मथमन्मथः ॥

"Unto them appeared Krishna with a smile on His lotus face, clad in yellow robes and having garlands on, the embodied conqueror (in beauty) of the god of love." (*Bhâgavata Purâna*).

Now to go back to our Âchârya Shankara: “Those,” he says, “who by worshipping the qualified Brahman attain conjunction with the Supreme Ruler, preserving their own mind—is their glory limited or unlimited? This doubt arising, we get as an argument: Their glory should be unlimited, because of the scriptural texts, ‘They attain their own kingdom;’ ‘To him all the gods offer worship;’ ‘Their desires are fulfilled in all the worlds.’ As an answer to this, Vyasa writes, ‘Without the power of ruling the universe.’ Barring the power of creation etc. of the universe, the other powers such as Animâ *etc*., are acquired by the liberated. As to ruling the universe, that belongs to the eter nally perfect Ishwara. Why? Because He is the subject of all the scriptural texts as regards creation etc., and the liberated souls are not mentioned therein in any connection whatsoever. The Supreme Lord indeed is alone engaged in ruling the universe. The texts as to creation *etc*., all point to Him. Besides, there is given the adjective ‘ever-perfect.’ Also the scriptures say that the powers Animâ *etc*., of the others are as from the search after, and the worship of, God. Therefore they have no place in the ruling of the universe. Again, on account of their possessing their own minds, it is possible that their wills may differ, and that, whilst one desires creation, another may desire destruction. The only way of avoiding this conflict is to make all wills subordinate to some one will. Therefore the conclusion is that the wills of the liberated are dependent on the will of the Supreme Ruler.”

Bhakti, then, can be directed towards Brahman only in His personal aspect. शोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्त सक्तचेरसाम्—“The way

is more difficult for those whose mind is attached to the Absolute!" Bhakti has to float on smoothly with the current of our nature. True it is that we cannot have any idea of the Brahman which is not anthropomorphic, but is it not equally true of everything we know? The greatest psychologist the world has ever known, Bhagavân Kapila, demonstrated ages ago that human consciousness is one of the elements in the make-up of all the objects of our perception and conception, internal as well as external. Beginning with our bodies and going up to Ishwara, we may see that every object of our perception is this consciousness plus something else, whatever that may be; and this unavoidable mixture is what we ordinarily think of as reality. Indeed it is, and ever will be, aIl of the reality that is possible for the human mind to know. Therefore to say that Ishwara is unreal, because He is anthropomorphic, is sheer nonsense. It sounds very much like the occidental squabble on idealism and realism, which fearfu1-looking quarrel has for its foundation a mere play on the word 'real.' The idea of Ishwara covers aIl the ground ever denoted and connoted bv the word real, and Ishwara is as real as anything else in the universe; and after an, the word real means nothing more than what has now been pointed out. Such is our philosophical conception of Ishwara.

SPIRITUAL REALISATION,
THE AIM OF BHAKTI-YOGA

To the Bhakta these dry details are necessary only to strengthen his will; beyond that they are of no use to him. For he is treading on a path which is fitted very soon to lead him beyond the hazy and turbulent regions of reason, to lead him to the realm of realisation. He, soon, through the mercy of the Lord, reaches a plane where pedantic and powerless reason is left far behind, and the mere intellectual groping through the dark gives place to the daylight of direct perception. He no more reasons and believes, he almost perceives. He no more argues, he senses. And is not this seeing God, and feeling God, and enjoying God, higher than everything else? Nay, Bhaktas have not been wanting who have maintained that it is higher than even Moksha—liberation. And is it not also the highest utility? There are people—and a good many of them too—in the world who are convinced that only that is of use and utility which brings to man creature-comforts. Even Religion, God, Eternity, Soul, none of these. is of any use to them, as they do not a bring them money or physical comfort. To such, all those things which do not go to gratify the senses and appease the appetites, are of no utility. In every mind, utility, however, is conditioned by its own peculiar wants. To men, therefore, who never rise higher than eating, drinking. begetting progeny, and dying, the only gain is in sense-enjoyments; and they must wait and go through many more births and

reincarnations to learn to feel even the faintest necessity for anything higher. But those to whom the eternal interests of the soul are of much higher value than the fleeting interests of this mundane life, to whom the gratification of the senses is but like the thoughtless play of the baby, to them God and the love of God form the highest and the only utility of human existence. Thank God there are some such still living in this world of too much worldliness.

Bhakti, as we have said, is divided into the गौणी (Gauni) or the preparatory, and the परा (Para) or the supreme forms. We shall find, as we go on, how in the preparatory stage we unavoidably stand in need of many concrete helps to enable us to get on; and indeed the mythological and symbological parts of all religions are natural growths which early environ the aspiring soul and help it Godward. It is also a significant fact, that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism. The dry fanatical forms of reli gion which attempt to eradicate all that is poeti cal, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Godward way—the forms which attempt to break down the very ridge-poles of the spiritual roof, and in their ignorant and superstitious conceptions of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative material to the spiritual plant growing in the human soul—such forms of religion too soon find that all that is left to them is but an empty shell, a contentless frame of words and sophistry, with perhaps a little flavour of a kind of social scavengering or the so-called spirit of reform. The vast mass of those whose religion is like this, are conscious

or unconscious materialists. The end and aim of their lives here and hereafter being enjoyment—which indeed is to them the alpha and the omega of human life, and which is their इष्टापूर्त (Ishtâ-purta—sacrifices and philanthropic works), work like street-cleaning and scavengering, intended for the material comfort of man—is, according to them, the "be-all" and "end-all" of human existence; and the sooner the followers of this curious mixture of ignorance and fanaticism come out in their true colours and join, as they well deserve to do, the ranks of atheists and materialists, the better will it be for the world. One ounce of the practice of righteousness and of spiritual Self-realisation outweighs tons of frothy talk and nonsensical sentiments. Show us one, but one, gigantic spiritual genius growing out of all this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism: and if you cannot, close your mouths, open the windows of your hearts to the clear light of truth, and sit like children at the feet of those who know what they are talking about—the sages of India. Let us then listen attentively to what they have to say.

THE NEED OF A GURU

Every soul is destined to be perfect. and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfec tion. Whatever we are now is the result of our acts and thoughts in the past; and whatever we shall be in the future will be the result of what we think and do now. But this. the shaping of our own destinies, does not preclude our receiving help from outside; nay, in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and. possibilities of the soul are quickened. Spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can only receive impulses from another soul. and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual. but in the end we find that we have not developed at all spiritually. It is not true that a high order of intellectual development always goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in man. In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that thereby we are being spiritually helped; but if we analyse the effect of the study of books on ourselves, we shall find that, at the utmost, it is only our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not our inner spirit. This inadequacy of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost every one of us can *speak* most wonderfully on Spiritual matters, when it comes to action

and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse, *must* come from another soul.

The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru—the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Shishya—the student. To convey such an impulse to any soul, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a. living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed; and when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place. "The true preacher of religion has to be of wonderful capabilities, and clever shall his hearer be"—आश्चर्यों वक्ता कुशलोऽम्य लब्धा; and when both of these are really wonderful and extraordinary, then will a splendid spiritual awakening result, and not otherwise. Such alone are the real teachers, and such alone are also the real students, the real aspirants. All others are only playing with spirituality. They have just a little curiosity awakened, just a little intellectual aspiration kindled in them, but are merely standing on the outward fringes of the horizon of religion. There is, no doubt, some value even in that, as it may in course of time result in the awakening of a real thirst for religion; and it is a mysterious law of nature that as soon as the field is ready the seed *must* and does come; as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force *must* and does appear to help that soul. When the power that attracts the light of religion in the receiving soul is full and strong, the

power which answers to that attraction and sends in light does scome as a matter of course.

There are, however, certain great dangers in the way. There is, for instance, the danger to the receiving soul of its mistaking momentary emotions for real religious yearning. We may study that in ourselves. Many a time in our lives, somebody dies whom we loved; we receive a blow; we feel that the world is slipping between our fingers, that we want something surer and higher, and that we must become religious. In a few days that wave of feeling has passed away, and we are left stranded just where we were before. We are all of us often mistaking such impulses for real thirst after religion; but as long as these momentary emotions are thus mistaken, that continuous, real, craving of the soul for religion will not come, and we shall not find the true transmitter of spirituality into our nature. So whenever we are tempted to complain of our search after the truth, that we desire so much, proving vain, instead of so complaining, our first duty ought to be to look into our own souls and find whether the craving in the heart is real. Then in the vast majority of cases it would be discovered that we were not fit for receiving the truth, that there was no real thirst for spirituality.

There are still greater dangers in regard to the *transmitter*, the Guru. There are many who, though immersed in ignorance, yet in the pride of their hearts, fancy they know everything, and not only do not stop there, but offer to take others on their shoulders: and thus the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch.

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तामानाः

स्वयंधीराः पा तम्मराडन्यमानाः ।

जंघन्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढा

अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

"Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind" *(Mund. Up.*, I. ii. 8). The world is full of these. Everyone wants to be a teacher, every beggar wants to make a gift of a million dollars! Just as these beggars are ridiculous, so are these teachers.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT AND THE TEACHER

How are we to know a teacher then? The sun requires no torch to make him visible, we need not light a candle in order to see him. When the sun rises, we instinctively become aware of the fact, and when a teacher of men comes to help us; the soul will instinctively know that truth has already begun to shine upon it. Truth stands on its own evidence, it does not require any other testimony to prove it true, it is self-effulgent. It penetrates into the innermost comers of our nature, and in its presence the whole universe stands up and says, “This is truth.” The teachers whose wisdom and truth shine like the light of the sun are the very greatest the world has known, and they are worshipped as God by the major portion of mankind. But we may get help from comparatively lesser ones also; only we ourselves do not possess intuition enough to judge properly of the man from whom we receive teaching and guidance; so there ought to be certain tests, certain conditions, for the teacher to satisfy, as there are also for the taught.

The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst after knowledge, and perseverance. No impure soul can be really religious. Purity in thought, speech, and act is absolutely necessary for anyone to be religious. As to the thirst after knowledge, it is an old law that we all get whatever we want. None of us can get anything other than what we fix our hearts upon. To pant for religion truly is a

very difficult thing, not at all so easy as we generally imagine. hearing religious talks or reading religious books, is no proof yet of a real want felt In the heart; there must be a continuous struggle, a constant fight, an unremitting grappling with our lower nature, till the higher want is actually felt and the victory is achieved. It is not a question of one or two days, of years, or of lives; the struggle may have to go on for hundreds of lifetimes. The success sometimes may come immediately, but we must be ready to wait patiently even for what. may look like an infinite length of time. The student who sets out with such a spirit of perseverance, will surely find success and realisation at last.

With regard to the teacher, we must see that he knows the spirit of the scriptures. The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas, and Korans; but they are all only words, syntax, etymology, philology—the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words, and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words, loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the *spirit* of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher. The network of the words of the scriptures is like a huge forest, in which the human mind often loses itself and finds no way out. शब्दजालं महाररायं चित्तभ्रमणकारणं—"The network of words is a big forest; it is the cause of a curious wandering of the mind." The various methods of joining words, the various methods of speaking in beautiful language, the various methods of explaining the diction. of the scriptures are only for the disputations and enjoyment of the learned, they do not conduce to the development of spiritual perception.

वान्वै खरी शव्दझरी शाम्त्र्व्यारव्यानकौशलं ।
वैदुष्यं विदुषां तहत् भुक्तये न तु नुक्तये ॥

Those who employ such methods to impart religion to others, are only desirous to show off their learning, so that the world may praise them as great scholars. You will find that no one of the great teachers of the world ever went into these various explanations of the texts; there is with them no attempt at "text-torturing," no eternal playing upon the meaning of words and their roots. Yet they nobly taught, while others who have nothing to teach have taken up a word, sometimes, and written a three-volume book on its origin, on the man who used it first, and on what that man was accustomed to eat, and how long he slept, and so on. Bhagavan Ramakrishna used to tell a story of some men who went into a mango orchard and busied themselves in counting the leaves, the twigs, and the branches—examining their colour, comparing their size, and noting down everything most carefully—and then got up a learned discussion on each of these topics, which were undoubtedly highly interesting to them. But one of them, more sensible than the others, did not care for all these things, and, instead thereof, began to eat the mango fruit. And was he not wise? So leave this counting of leaves and twigs and note-taking to others. This kind of work has its proper place, but not here in the spiritual domain. You never see a strong spiritual man among these "leaf-counters." Religion, the highest aim, the highest glory of man, does not a require so much labour. If you want to be a *Bhakta*, it is not at all necessary for you to know whether Krishna was born in Mathura or says in Vraja,

what he was doing, or just the exact date on which he pronounced the teachings of the Gita. You only require to *feel* the craving for the beautiful lessons of duty and love in the Gita. All the other particulars about it and its author are for the enjoyment of the learned. Let them have what they desire. Say "Shantih, Shantih" (peace, peace) to their learned controversies, and let *us* "eat the mangoes."

The second condition necessary in the teacher is—sinlessness. The question is often asked, "Why should we look, into the character and personality of a teacher? We have only to judge of what he says and take that. up." This is not right. If a man wants to teach me something of dynamics, or chemistry, or any other physical science, he may be anything he likes, because what the physical sciences require is merely an intellectual equipment; but in the spiritual sciences it is impossible, from first to last, that there can be any spiritual light in the soul that is impure. What religion can an impure man teach? The *sine qua non* of acquiring spiritual truth for one's self, or for imparting it to others, is the purity of heart and soul. A vision of God or a glimpse of the beyond never comes until the soul is pure. Hence with the teacher of religion we must see first what he *is*, and then what he says. He must be perfectly pure, and then alone comes the value of his words, because he is only then the true "transmitter." What can he transmit if. he has not spiritual power in himself? There must be the worthy vibration of spirituality in the mind of the teacher, so that it may be sympathetically conveyed to the mind of the taught. The function of the teacher is indeed an affair of the transference of something, and not one of mere stimulation of the existing

intellectual or other faculties in the taught. Something real and appreciable as an influence comes from the teacher and goes to the taught. Therefore the teacher must be pure.

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive for money, name, or fame; his work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large. The only medium sI through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love. Any selfish motive, such as the desire for gain or for name, will immediately destroy, this conveying medium. God is love, and only he who has known God as love can be a teacher of godliness and God to man.

When you see that in your teacher these conditions are all fulfilled, you are safe; if they are not, it is unsafe to allow yourself to be taught by him, for there is the great danger that, if he cannot convey goodness to your heart, he may le convey wickedness. This danger must by all means be guarded against. श्रोत्रियोऽवृजिनोऽकामहतो यो ब्रह्मवित्तमः—"He who is learned in the Scriptures, sinless. unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of the Brahman," is the real teacher.

From what has been said, it naturally follows that we cannot be taught to love, appreciate, and assimilate religion everywhere and by everybody, The "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything"—is all very true as a poetical figure: but nothing can impart to a man a single grain of truth unless he has the undeveloped germs of it in himself. To whom do the stones and brooks preach sermons? To the human soul, the lotus of whose inner holy shrine is already quick with life. And the light which causes the beautiful opening out of this lotus comes

always from the good and wise teacher. When the heart has thus been opened, it becomes fit to receive teaching from the stones or the brooks, the stars or the sun or the moon, or from anything which bas its existence in our divine universe; but the unopened heart will see in them nothing but mere stones or mere brooks. A blind man may go to a museum, but he will not profit by it in any way; his eyes must be opened first, and then alone he will be able to learn what the things in the museum can teach.

This eye-opener of the aspirant after religion is the teacher. With the teacher, therefore, our relationship is the same as that between an ancestor and his descendant. Without faith, humility, submission, and veneration in our hearts towards our religious teacher, there can not be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that, where this kind of relation an between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing; while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, the religious teacher has become a mere lecturer—the teacher expecting his five dollars, and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teacher's words, and each going his own way after this much has been done. Under such circumstances spirituality becomes almost an unknown quantity. There is none to transmit it and none to have it transmitted to. Religion with such people becomes business: they think they can obtain it with their dollars. Would to God that religion could be obtained so easily! But unfortunately it cannot be.

Religion, which is the highest knowledge and the highest wisdom, cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from

books. You may thrust your head into all the corners of the world, you may explore the Himalayas, the Alps, and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea and pry into every nook of Tibet and the desert of Gobi, you will not find it anywhere until your heart is ready lor receiving it and your teacher has come. And when that divinely appointed teacher comes, serve him with childlike confidence and simplicity, freely open your heart to his influence, and see in him God manifested. Those who come to seek truth with such a spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things regarding Truth, goodness, and Beauty.

INCARNATE TEACHERS AND INCARNATION

Wherever His name is spoken, that very place is holy. How much more so is the man who of speaks His name, and with what veneration ought im we to approach that man out of whom comes to us spiritual truth! Such great teachers of a spiritual truth are indeed very few in number as in this world, but the world is never altogether mc without them. They are always the fairest as flowers of human life अहतुकदयासिन्धु—"the ocean of mercy without any motive." आचार्यं मां विजानीयात्—"Know the Guru to be Me," says Shri Krishna in the *Bhâgavata*. The moment the world is absolutely bereft of these, it becomes a hideous hell and hastens on to its destruction.

Higher and nobler than all ordinary ones, are another set of teachers, the Avatâras of Ishwara, in the world. They can transmit spirituality an with a touch, even with a mere wish. The lowest and the most degraded characters become in one second saints at their command. They are the Teachers of all teachers, the highest manifesta tions of God through man. We cannot see God except through them. We cannot help worshipping them; and indeed they are the only ones whom we are bound to worship.

No man can really see God except through these human manifestations. If we try to see God otherwise, we make for ourselves a hideous caricature of Him and believe the caricature to be no worse than the original. There is a story of

an ignorant man who was asked to make an image of the God Shiva, and who, after days of hard struggle, manufactured only the image of a monkey. So, whenever we try to think of God as He is in His absolute perfection, we invariably meet with the most miserable failure; because as long as we are men, we cannot conceive Him as anything higher than man. The time will come when we shall transcend our human nature and know Him as He is; but as long as we are men we must worship Him in man and as man. Talk, as you may, try as you may, you cannot think of God except as a man. You may deliver great intellectual discourses on God and on all things under the sun, become great rationalists and prove to your satisfaction that all these accounts of the Avatâras of God as man are nonsense. But let us come for a moment to practical common sense. What is there behind this kind of remarkable intellect? Zero, nothing, simply so much froth. When next you hear a man delivering a great intellectual lecture against this worship of the Avatâras of God, get hold of him and ask him what *his* idea of God is, what *he* understands by "omnipotence," "omnipresence," and all similar terms, beyond the spelling of the words. He really means nothing by them; he cannot formulate as theIr meaning the any idea unaffected by his own human nature; of he is no better off in this matter than the man ma in the street who has not read a single book. That man in the street, however, is quiet and does not disturb the peace of the world; while this big talker creates disturbance and misery among mankind. Religion is, after all, realisation, and we must make the sharpest distinction between talk and intuitive experience. What we experience in the depths of our souls is

realisa tion. Nothing indeed is so uncommon as common sense in regard to this matter. By our present constitution we are limited and bound to see God as man. If, for instance, the buffaloes want to worship God, they will, in keeping with their own nature, see Him as a huge buffalo; if a fish wants to worship God, it will have to form an idea of Him as a big fish; and man has to think of Him as man. And his these various conceptions are not due to morbidly active imagination. Man, the buffalo, and the fish—all may be supposed to represent so many different vessels, so to say. All these vessels go to the sea of God to get filled with water, each according to its own shape and capacity; in the man, the water takes the shape of man, in the buffalo, the shape of a buffalo, and in the fish, the shape of a fish. In each of these vessels there is the same water of the sea of God. When men see Him, they see Him as man, and the animals, if they have any conception of God at all, must see Him as animal—each according to its own ideal. So we cannot help seeing God as man, and, therefore, we are bound to worship Him as man. There is no other way.

Two kinds of men do not worship God as man—the human brute who has no religion, and the. Paramahamsa who has risen beyond all the weaknesses of humanity and has transcended the limits of his own human nature. To him all nature has become his own Self. He alone can worship God as He is. Here, too, as in all other cases, the two extremes meet. The extreme of jgnorance and the other extreme of knowledge—neither of these goes through acts of worship. The human brute does not worship because of his ignorance, and the Jivanmuktas (free souls) do not worship,

because they have realised God in theinselves. Being between these two poles of existence, if any one tells you that he is not going to worship God as man, take kindly care of that man: he is, not to use any harsher term, an irresponsible talker; his religion is for unsound and empty brains.

God understands human failings and becomes man to do good to humanity.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य म्लानिर्भवति ा़रत।
अध्युत्यानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
परिवाणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कताम्।
धर्मसंरर्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥

—"Whenever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails I manifest Myself. To establish virtue, to destroy evil, to save the good I come from Yuga to Yuga (age to age)."

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रतम्।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम ूत़महेश्ररम्॥

—"Fools deride Me who have assumed the human form, without knowing My real nature as the Lord of the universe." Such is Shri Krishna's declaration in the Gitâ on Incarnation. "When a huge tidal wave comes," says Bhagavân Shri Ramakrishna, "all the little brooks and ditches become full to the brim without any effort or consciousness on their own part; so when an Incarnation comes, a tidal wave of spirituality breaks upon the world, and people feel spirituality almost full in the air ."

THE MANTRA: OM:
WORD AND WISDOM

But we are now considering not these *Mahâ-purushas,* the great Incarnations, but only the Siddha-Gurus (teachers who have attained the goal) ; they, as a rule, have to convey the germs of spiritual wisdom to the disciple by means of words (Mantra) to be meditated upon. What are these Mantras? The whole of this universe has, according to Indian philosophy, both name and form (नामरूप) as its conditions of manifestation. In the human microcosm, there cannot be a single wave in the mind-stuff (चित्तब्रत्ति) unconditioned by name and form. If it be true that nature is built throughout on the same plan, this kind of conditioning by nameand form must also be the plan of the building of the whole of the cosmos. याथ एकेन मृत्पिराडेन मर्वं मृन्मयं विज्ञातं स्यात्—"As one lump of clay being known, all things of clay are known," so the knowledge of the microcosm must lead to the knowledge of the macrocosm. Now, form is the outer crust, of which the name or the idea is the inner essence or kernel. The body is the form, and the mind or the Antahkarana is the name ; and sound-symhols are universally associated with नाम (name) in all beings having the power of speech. In the individual man the thought-waves rising in the limited महत् (Mahat) or चित्त (mind-stuff) must manifest themselves, first as *words,* and then as the more concrete *forms.*

In the universe, Brahma or Hiranyagarbha or the Cosmic महत् (Mahat) first manifested himself as name, and then as

form, i.e. as this universe. All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible सफोट (Sphota), the manifester as *Logos* or Word. This eternal Sphota, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned; as the Sphota, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This Sphota has one word as its only possible symbol, , and this is the ओं (Om). And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this Om and the eternal Sphota are inseparable; and therefore it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal Om, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created. But it may be said that, although thought and word are inseparable, yet as there may be various word-symbols for the same thought, it is not necessary that this particular word Om should be the word representative of the thought, out of which the universe has become manifested. To this objection we reply, that this Om is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground, and there is none other like it. The Sphota is the material of all words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the peculiarities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the Sphota; therefore this Sphota is called the नादब्रह्म (Nâda- Brahma), the *Sound-Brahman*. Now, as every word-symbol, intended to express the inexpressible Sphota will so particularise it that it will no longer be the Sphota, that symbol which particularises it the least and at the same time most approximately expresses its nature, will be the truest symbol thereof; and

this is the Om, and the Om only; because these three letters, अ, उ, म (A, U, M), pronounced in combination as Om, may well be the generalised symbol of all possible sounds. The letter अ (A) is the least differentiated of all sounds; therefore Krishna says in the Gita, अत्तराणामकारोऽस्मि—"I am *A* among the letters."[1] Again, all articulate sounds are produced in the space within the mouth beginning 'With the root of the tongue and ending in the lips-the throat sound is A, and M is the last lip sound; and the U exactly represents the rolling forward of the impulse which begins at the root of the tongue till it ends in the lips. If properly pronounced, this Om will represent the whole phenomenon of sound-production, and no other word can do this; and this, therefore, is the fittest symbol of the Sphota, which is the real meaning of the Om. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the Om and the Sphota are one. And as the Sphota, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearer to God, and is indeed the first manifestation of Divine Wisdom, this Om is truly symbolic of God. Again, just as the "One only" Brahman, the Akhanda-Sachchidânanda, the undivided Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, can be conceived. by imperfect human souls only from particular standpoints and associated with particular qualities, so this universe, His body, has also to be thought of along the line of the thinker's mind.

This direction of the worshipper's mind is guided by its prevailing elements or Tattvas. The result is, that the same

[1] That's as may be… but Being begins with a B (and Berashith begins with a Beth). — T.S.

God will be seen in various manifestations as the possessor of various predominant qualities, and the same universe win appear as full of manifold forms. Even as in the case of the least differentiated and the most universal symbol Om, thought and sound-symbol are seen to be inseparably associated with each other, so also this law of their inseparable association applies to the many differentiated views of God and the universe: each of them therefore must have a particular word-symbol to express it. These word-symbols, evolved out of the deepest spiritual perceptions of sages, symbolise and express, as nearly as possible, the particular view of God and the universe they stand for. And as the Om represents the Akhanda, the undifferentiated Brahman, the others represent the Khanda or the differentiated views of the same Being; and they are all helpful to divine meditation and the acquisition of true knowledge.

WORSHIP OF SUBSTITUTES AND IMAGES

The next points to be considered are the worship of Pratikas or of things more or less satisfactory as substitutes for God, and the worship of Pratimas or images. What is the worship of God through a Pratika? It is अब्रह्मणि ब्रह्मदृष्ट्यानुसन्धानम्—"Joining the mind with devotion to that which is not Brahman, taking it to be Brahman," says Bhagavan Râmânuja. "Worship the mind as Brahman—this is internal; and the Âkâsha is Brahman—this is with regard to the Devas," says Shankara. The mind is an internal Pratika, the Âkâsha is an external one; and both have to be worshipped as substitutes of God. He continues, "Similarly, 'The Sun is Brahman—this is the command' . . . 'He who worships name as Brahman'—in all such passages the doubt arises as to the worship of Pratikas . . ." The word Pratika means going towards; and worshipping a Pratika is worshipping something as a substitute which is, in some one or more respects, like the Brahman more and more, but is not the Brahman. Along with the Pratikas mentioned in the Shrutis there are various others to be found in the Puranas and the Tantras. In this kind of Pratika-worship may be included all the various forms of Pitri (manes)-worship and Deva (god)-worship.

Now, worshipping Ishwara and Him alone is Bhakti ; the worship of anything else, Deva or Pitri, or any other being cannot be Bhakti. The various kinds of worship of the

various Devas are all to be included in ritualistic Karma which gives to the worshipper only a particular result in the form of some celestial enjoyment, but can neither give rise to Bhakti nor lead to Mukti. One thing, therefore, has to be carefully borne in mind. If, as it may happen in some cases, the highly philosophic ideal, the supreme Brahman, is dragged down by Pratika-worship to the level of the Pratika, and the Pratika itself is taken to be the Âtman (self) of the worshipper, or his Antaryâmin (God as Inner Ruler), the worshipper gets entirely misled, as no Pratika can really be the Âtman of the worshipper. But where Brahman Himself is the object of worship, and the Pratika stands only as a substitute or a suggestion thereof, that is to say, where, through the Pratika the omnipresent Brahman is worshipped —the Pratika itself being idealised into the cause of all, the Brahman—the worship is positively beneficial; nay, it is absolutely necessary for all mankind, until they have all got beyond the primary or preparatory state of the mind in regard to worship. When, the.refore, any gods or other beings are worshipped in and for themselves, such worship is only a ritualistic Karma and as a Vidya (science) it gives us only the fruit belonging to that particular Vidya; but when the Devas or any other beings are looked upon as Brahman and worshipped, the result obtained is the same as by the worshipping of Ishwara. This explains how, in many cases, both in the Shrutis and the Smritis, a god, or a sage, or some other extraordinary being is taken up and lifted, as it were, out of its own nature and idealised into Brahman, and is then worshipped. Says the Advaitin, "Is not everything Brahman when the name and the form have been removed from it ?"

“Is not He, the Lord, the innermost self of everyone?” says the Vishishtâdvaitin: कत्नम् आदित्याद्यु पासनेषु ब्रह्मै व दास्यति सर्वाध्यक्षत्वत्—“The fruition of even the worship of Âdityas *etc*., Brahman Himself bestows, because He is the Ruler of all.” Says Shankara, in his *Brahma-Sutra-Bhâshya*: ईहश चात्र ब्रह्मणः उपास्यत्चं यतः प्रतीकेषु तद्दृष्टाध्यारोपणं प्रतिमादिषु इव विष्णादीनाम्—“Here in this way does Brahman become the object of worship, because He, as Brahman, is superimposed on the Pratikas, just as Vishnu etc., are superimposed upon images etc.”

The same ideas apply to the worship of the Pratimas as to that of the Pratikas; that is to say, if the image stands for a god or a saint, the worship is not the result of Bhakti, and does not lead to liberation; but if it stands for the one God, the worship thereof will bring both Bhakti and Mukti. Of the principal religions of the world we see Vedantism, Buddhism, and certain forms of Christianity freely using images; only two religions, Mohammedanism and Protestantism, refuse such help. Yet the Mohammedans use the graves of their saints and martyrs almost in the place of images; and the Protestants, in rejecting all concrete helps to religion, are drifting away every year farther and farther from spirituality, till at present there is scarcely any difference between the advanced Protestants and the followers of Auguste Comte, or the Agnostics who preach ethics alone. Again, in Christianity and Mohammedanism, whatever exists of image-worship is made to fall under that category in which the Pratika or the Pratima is worshipped in itself, but not as a “help to the vision” (दृष्टिसौकर्यम्) of God; therefore it is at best only of the nature of ritualistic Karmas

and cannot produce either Bhakti or Mukti. In this form of image-worship. the allegiance of the soul is given to other things than Ishwara, and therefore. such use of images, or graves, or temples, or tombs is real idolatry; it is in itself neither sinful nor wicked—it is a rite—a Karma, and worshippers must and will get the fruit thereof.

THE CHOSEN IDEAL

The next thing to be considered is. what we know as Ishta-Nishthâ. One who aspires to be a Bhakta must know that "so many opinions are so many ways." He must know that all the various sects of the various religions are the various manifestations of the glory of the same Lord. "They call You by so many names; they divide You, as it were, by different names, yet in each one of these is to be found Your omnipotence. You reach the worshipper through all of these; neither is there any special time so long as the soul has intense love for You. You are so easy of approach; it is my misfortune that I cannot love You." Not only this, the Bhakta must take care not to hate, or even to criticise, those radiant sons of light who are the founders of various sects; he must not even hear them spoken ill of. Very few indeed are those who are at once the possessors of an extensive sympathy and power of appreciation, as well as an intensity of love. We find as a rule that liberal and sympathetic sects lose the intensity of religious feeling, and in their hands, religion is apt to degenerate into a kind of politico-social club life. On the other hand, intensely narrow sectaries, whilst displaying a very commendable love of their own ideals, are seen to have acquired every particle of that love by hating everyone who is not of exactly the same opinions as themselves. Would to God that this world was full of men who were as intense in their love as world-wide in their sympathies! But such are only few and far between. Yet we

know that it is practicable to educate large numbers of human beings into the ideal of a wonderful blending of both the width and the intensity of love; and the way to do that is by this path of the Ishta-Nishtha or steadfast devotion to the "chosen ideal." Every sect of every religion presents only one ideal of its own to mankind, but the eternal Vedantic religion opens to mankind an infinite number of doors for ingress into the inner shrine of Divinity, and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the Eternal One. With the kindest solicitude, the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads, hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life by the glorious sons, or human manifestations of God in the past and in the present, and stands with outstretched arms to welcome all—to welcome even those that are yet to be—to that IIome of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss, wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of Maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and with eternal joy.

Bhakti-Yoga, therefore, lays on us the imperative command not to hate or deny anyone of the various paths that lead to salvation. Yet the growing plant must be hedged round to protect it until it has grown into a tree. The tender plant of spirituality will die, if exposed too early to the action of a constant change of ideas and ideals. Many people, in the name of what may be called religious liberalism, may be seen feeding their idle curiosity with a continuous succession of different ideals. With them, hearing new things grows into a kind of disease, a sort of religious drink-mania. They want to hear new things just by

way of getting a temporary nervous excitement, and when one such exciting influence has had its effect on them, they are ready for another. Religion is with these people a sort of intellectual opium-eating, and there it ends. "There is another sort of man," says Bhagavan Ramakrishna, "who is like the pearl-oyster of the story. The pearl-oyster leaves its bed at the bottom of the sea, and comes up to the surface to catch the rain-water when the star Svati is in the ascendant. It floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open; until it has succeeded in catching a drop of the rain-water, and then it dives deep down to its sea-bed and there rests until it has succeeded in fashioning a beautiful pearl out of that rain-drop."

This is indeed the most poetical and forcible way in which the theory of lshta-Nishtha has ever been put. This Eka-Nishtha, or devotion to one ideal, is absolutely necessary for the beginner in the practice of religious devotion. He must say with Hanuman in the Ramayana, "Though I know that the Lord of Shri (i.e. Vishnu) and the Lord of Jânaki (i.e. Rama) are both manifestations of the same Supreme Being, yet my all in all is the lotus-eyed Rama;" or, as was said by the sage Tulsidas, he must say, "Take the sweetness of all, sit with all, take the name of all, say yea, yea, but keep your seat firm." Then, if the devotional aspirant is sincere, out of this little seed will come a gigantic tree, like the Indian banyan, sending out branch after branch and root after root to all sides, till it covers the entire field of religion: Thus will the true devotee realise that He who was his own ideal in life is worshipped in all ideals by all sects, under all names, and through all forms.

THE METHOD AND THE MEANS

In regard to the method and the menns of Bhakti- Yoga we read in the commentary of Bhagavan Râmânuja on the *Vedânta-Sutras*: “The attaining of That comes through discrimination, controlling the passions, practice, sacri ficial work, purity, strength, and suppression of excessive joy.” Viveka or discrimination is, according to Râmânuja, discriminating, among other things, the pure food from the impure. According to him, food becomes impure from three causes: (1) by the nature of the food itself, as in the case of garlic *etc.*; (2) owing to its coming from wicked and accursed persons; and (3) from physical impurities, such as dirt, or hair etc. The Shrutis say, “When the food is pure, the Sattva element gets purified, and the memory becomes unwavering,” and Râmânuja quotes this from the Chhândogya Upanishad. The question of food has always been one of the most vital with the Bhaktas. Apart from the extravagance into which some of the Bhakti sects have run, there is a great truth underlying this question of food. We must remember that, according to the Sankhya philosophy, the Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, which in the state of homogeneous equilibrium form the Prakriti (Primordial Nature), and in the heterogeneous disturbed condition form the universe—are both the substance and the quality of Prakriti. As such they are the materials out of which every human form has been manufactured, and the predominance of the Sattva material is what is absolutely necessary for spiritual development. The materials which

we receive through our food into our body-structure, go a great way to determine our mental constitution; therefore the food we eat has to be particularly taken care of. However, in this matter as in others, the fanaticism into which the disciples invariably fall, is not to be laid at the door of the masters.

And this discrim,ination of food is, after all, of secondary importance. The very same passage quoted above is explained by Shankara in his *Bhâshya* on the Upanishads in a different way, by giving an entirely different meaning to the word Âhâra, translated generally as food. According to him, "That which is gathered in is Âhâra. The knowledge of the sensations such as sound *etc*., is gathered in for the enjoyment of the enjoyer (self); the purification of the knowledge which gathers in the perception of the senses is the purifying of the food (Âhâra). The word 'purification-of-food' means the acquiring of the knowledge of sensations untouched by the defects of attachment, aversion and delusion; such is the meaning. Therefore, such knowledge or Âhâra being purified, the Sattva material of the possessor of it—the internal organ will become purified; and the Sattva being purified, an unbroken memory of the Infinite One who has been known in His real nature from scriptures, will result."

These two explanations are apparently conflicting, yet both are true and necessary. The manipulating and controlling of what may be called the finer body, *viz*. the mind, are no doubt higher functions than the controlling of the grosser body of flesh. But the control of the grosser is absolutely necessary to enable one to arrive at the control of the finer. The beginner, therefore, must pay particular attention to all such dietetic rules as have come down from the line of his

accredited teachers; but the extravagant, meaningless fanaticism, which has driven religion entirely to the kitchen, as may be noticed in the case of many of our sects, without any hope of the noble truth of that religion ever coming out to the sunlight of spirituality, is a peculiar sort of pure and simple materialism. It is neither Jnana, nor Bhakti, nor Karma; it is a special kind of lunacy, and those who pin their souls to it. are more likely to go to lunatic asylums than to Brahmaloka. So it stands to reason .that discrimination in the choice of food is necessary for the attainment of this higher state of mental composition, which cannot be easily obtained otherwise.

Controlling the passions is the next thing to be attended. to. To restrain the Indriyas (organs) from going towards the objects of the senses, to control them and bring them under the guidance of the will, is the very central virtue in religious culture. Then comes the practice of self-restraint and self-denial. All the immense possibilities of divine realisation in the soul cannot get actualised without struggle and without such practice on the part of the aspiring devotee. “The mind must always think of the Lord.” It is very hard at first to compel the mind to think of the Lord always, but with every new effort the power to do so grows stronger in us. “By practice, O son of Kunti, and by non-attachment is it attained,” says Shri Krishna in the Gita. And then as to sacrificial work, it is understood that the five great sacrifices (पंचमहायज्ञ) have to be performed as usual.

Purity is absolutely the basic work, the bed- rock upon which the whole Bhakti-building tests. Cleansing the external body and discriminating the food are both easy, but

without internal cleanliness and purity these external observances are of no value whatsoever. In the list of the qualities conducive to purity, as given by Râmânuja, there are enumerated, Satya, truthfulness; Ârjava, sincerity; Dayâ, doing good to others without any gain to one's self; Ahimsâ, not injuring others by thought, word, or deed; Anabhidhyâ; not coveting others' goods, not thinking vain thoughts, and not brooding over injuries received from another. In this list, the one idea that deserves special notice is Ahimsâ, non-injury to others. This duty of non-injury is, so to speak, obligatory on us in relation to all beings; as with some, it does not simply mean the non-injuring of human beings and mercilessness towards the lower animals; nor, as with some others, does it mean the protecting of cats and dogs and the feeding of ants with sugar, with liberty to injure brother-man in every horrible way. It is remarkable that almost every good idea in this world can be carried to a disgusting extreme. A good practice carried to an extreme and worked in accordance with the letter of the law becomes a positive evil. The stinking monks of certain religious sects, who do not bathe lest the vermin on their bodies should be killed, never think of the discomfort and disease they bring to their fellow human beings. They do not, however, belong to the religion of the Vedas !

The test of Ahimsa is absence of jealousy. Any man may do a good deed or make a good gift on the spur of the moment, or under the pressure of some superstition or priestcraft; but the real lover of mankind is he who is jealous of none. The so-called great men of the world may all be seen to become jealous of each other for a small name, for a little fame, and

for a few bits of gold. So long as this jealousy exists in a heart, it is far away from the perfection of Ahimsa. The cow does not eat meat, nor does the sheep. Are they great Yogis, great non-injurers (Ahimsakas)? Any fool may abstain from eating this or that; surely that gives him no more distinction than to herbivorous animals. The man who will mercilessly cheat widows and orphans, and do the vilest deeds for money is worse than any brute, even if he lives entirely on grass. The man whose heart never cherishes even the thought of injury to anyone, who rejoices at the prosperity of even his greatest enemy, that man is the Bhakta, he is the Yogi, he is the Guru of all, even though he lives every day of his life on the flesh of swine. Therefore we must always remember that external practices have value only as help to develop internal purity. It is better to have internal purity alone, when minute attention to external observances is not practicable. But woe unto the man and woe unto the nation, that forgets the real, internal spiritual essentials of religion, and mechanically clutches with death-like grasp at all external forms and never lets them go. The forms have value only so far as they are expressions of the life within. If they have ceased to express life, crush them out without mercy.

The next means to the attainment of Bhakti- Yoga is strength (Anavasâda). "This Âtman is not to be attained by the weak," says the Shruti. Both physical weakness and mental weakness are meant here. "The strong, the hardy" are the only fit students. What can puny, little, decrepit things do? They will break to pieces wherfever the mysterious forces of the body and mind are even slightly awakened by

the practice of any of the Yogas. It is "the young, the healthy, the strong," that can score success. Physical strength, therefore, is absolutely necessary. It is the strong body alone that can beat the shock of reaction resulting from the attempt to control the organs. He who wants to become a Bhakta must be strong, must be healthy. When the miserably weak attempt any of the Yogas, they are likely to get some incurable malady, or they weaken their minds. Voluntarily weakening the body is really no prescription for spiritual enlightenment.

The mentally weak also cannot succeed in attaining the Atman. The person who aspires, to be a Bhakta must be cheerful. In the Western world the idea of a religious man is that he never smiles, that a dark cloud must always hang over his face, which, again, must be long-drawn with the jaws almost collapsed. People with emaciated bodies and long faces are fit subjects for the physician, they are not Yogis. It is the cheerful mind that is persevering. It is the strong mind that hews its way through a thousand difficulties. And this, the hardest task of all, the cutting of our way out of the net of Maya, is the work reserved only for giant wills.

Yet at the same time excessive mirth should be avoided (Anuddharsha). Excessive mirth makes us unfit for serious thought. It also fritters away the energies of the mind in vain. The stronger the will, the less the yielding to the sway of the emotions. Excessive hilarity is quite as objectionable as too much of sad seriousness, and all religious realisation is possible only when the mind is in a steady, peaceful condition of harmonious equilibrium. It is thus that one may begin to learn how to love the Lord.

PARA-BHAKTI

OR

SUPREME DEVOTION

THE PREPARATORY RENUNCIATION

We have now finished the cobsideration of what may be called the preparatory Bhakti, and are entering on the study of the Para-Bhakti, or supreme devotion. We have to speak of a preparation to the practice of this Para-Bhakti. All such preparations are intended only for the purification of the soul. The repetition of names, the rituals, the forms, and the symbols—all these various things are for the purification of the soul. The greatest purifier among all such things, a purifier without which no one can enter the regions of this higher devotion (Para-Bhakti), is renunciation, This frightens many: yet, without it, there cannot be any spiritual growth. In all our Yogas this renunciation is necessary. This is the stepping-stone and the real centre and the real heart of all spiritual culture-renunciation. This is religion—renunciation. When the human soul draws back from the things of the world and tries to go into deeper things; when man, the spirit which has here somehow become concretised and materialised, understands that he is thereby going to be destroyed and. to be reduced almost into mere matter, and turns his face away from matter, then begins renunciation, then begins real spiritual growth. The Karma-Yogi's renunciation is in the shape of giving up all the fruits of his actions; he is not attached to the results of his labours; he does not care for any reward here or hereafter. The Raja-Yogi knows that the whole of nature is intended for the soul to acquire experience, and that

the result of all the experiences of the soul is for it to become aware of its eternal separateness from nature. The human soul has to understand and realise that it has been spirit, and not matter, through eternity; and that this conjunction of it with matter is and can be only for a time. The Raja-Yogi learns the lesson of renunciation through his own. experience of nature. The Jnana-Yogi has the harshest of all renunciations to go through, as he. has to realise from the very first that the whole of this solid-looking nature is all an illusion. He has to understand that all that is any kind of manifestation of power in nature, belongs to the soul, and not to nature. He has to know, from the very start, that all knowledge and all experience are in the soul, and not in nature; so he has at once and by the sheer force of rational conviction to tear himself away from all bondage to nature. He lets nature and all that belongs to her go, he lets them vanish and tries to stand alone!

Of all renunciations, the most natural, so to say, is that of the Bhakti-Yogi. Here, there is no violence, nothing to give up, nothing to tear off, as it were, from ourselves, nothing from which we have violently to separate ourselves; the Bhakta's renunciation is easy, smooth, flowing, and as natural as the things around us. We see the manifestation of this sort of renunciation, although more or less in the form of caricatures, every day around us. A man begins to love a woman; after a while he loves another, and the first woman he lets go. She drops out of his mind smoothly, gently, without his feeling the want of her at all. A woman loves .a man; she then begins to love another man, and the first one drops off from her mind quite naturally. A man loves his own city, then he

begins to love his country; and the intense love for his little city drops off smoothly, naturally. Again, a man learns to love the whole world; his love for his country, his intense, fanatical patriotism drops off without hurting him, without any manifestation of violence. An uncultured man loves the pleasures of the senses intensely; as he becomes cultured, he begins to love intellectual pleasures, and his sense-enjoyments become less and less. No man can enjoy a meal with the same gusto or pleasure as a dog or a wolf; but those pleasures which a man gets from intellectual experiences and achievements, the dog can never enjoy. At first, pleasure, is in association with the lower senses; but as soon as an animal reaches a higher plane of existence, the lower kind of pleasures becomes less intense. In human society, the nearer the man is to the animal, the stronger is his pleasure in the senses; and the higher and the more cultured the man is, the greater is his pleasure in intellectual. and such other finer pursuits. So, when a man gets even higher than the plane of the intellect, higher than that of mere thought, when he gets to the plane of spirituality and of divine inspiration, he finds there a state of bliss, compared with which all the pleasures of the senses, or even of the intellect, are as nothing. When the moon shines brightly, all the stars become dim; and when the sun shines, the moon herself becomes dim. The renunciation necessary for the attainment of Bhakti is not obtained by killing anything, but just comes, in as naturally as in the presence of an increasingly stronger light, the less intense ones become dimmer and dimmer until they vanish away completely. So this love of the pleasures of the senses and of the intellect js all made dim and thrown aside and cast

into the shade by the love of God Himself. That love of God grows and assumes a form which, is called Para-Bhakti, or supreme devotion. Forms vanish, rituals flyaway, books are superseded, images, temples, churches, religions and sects, countries and nationalities—all these little limitations, and bondages fall off by their own nature from him who knows this love of God. Nothing remains to bind him or fetter his freedom. A ship, all of a sudden, comes near a .magnetic rock; and its iron bolts and bars are all attracted and drawn out, and the planks get loosened and freely float on the water. Divine grace thus loosens the binding bolts and bars of the soul, and it becomes free. So in this renunciation, auxiliary to devotion, there is no harshness, no dryness, no struggle, nor repression or suppression. The Bhakta has not to suppress any single one of his emotions, he only strives to intensify them and direct them to God.

THE BHAKTA'S RENUNCIATION RESULTS FROM LOVE

We see love everywhere in nature. Whatever in society is good and great and sublime is the working out of that love; whatever in society is very bad, nay diabolical, is also the ill-directed working out of the same emotion of love. It is this same emotion that gives us the pure and holy conjugal love between husband and wife, as well as the sort of love which goes to satisfy the lowest forms of animal passion. The emotion is the same, but its manifestation is different in different cases. It is the same feeling of love, well or ill-directed, that impels one man to do good and to give all he has to the poor, while it makes another man cut the throats of his brethren and take away all their possessions. The former loves others as much as the latter loves himself. The direction of the love is bad in the case of the latter but it is right and proper in the other case. The same fire that cooks a meal for us may bum a child, and it is no fault of the fire if it does so; the difference lies in the way in which it is used. Therefore, love, the intense longing for associa tion, the strong desire on the part of two to become one—and, it may be after all, of all to become merged in one—is being manifested everywhere in higher or lower forms as the case may be. Bhakti-Yoga is the science of higher love; it shows us how to direct it; it shows us I how to control it, how to manage it, how to use it, how to give it a new aim, as it were, and from it obtain the highest and most glorious results, that is, how to

make it lead us to spiritual blessedness. Bhakti-Yoga does not say, "Give up"; it only says "Love; love the Highest"; and everything low naturally falls off from him, the object of whose love is this Highest.

"I cannot tell anything about Thee, except that Thou art my love. Thou art beautiful, Oh, Thou art beautiful! Thou art beauty itself." What is after all really required of us in this Yoga is, that our thirst after the beautiful should be directed to God. What is the beauty in the human face, in the sky, in the stars, and in the moon? It is only the partial apprehension of the real all-embracing Divine Beauty. "He shining, everything shines. It is through His light that all things shine." Take this high position of Bhakti which makes you forget at once all your little personalities. Take yourself away from all the world's little selfish clingings. Do not look upon humanity as the centre of all your human and higher interests. Stand as a witness, as a student, and observe the phenomena of nature. Have the feeling of personal non-attachment with regard to man, and see how this mighty feeling of love is working itself out in the world. Sometimes a little friction is produced, but that is only in the course of the struggle to attain the higher real love. Sometimes there is a little fight, or a little fall; but it is all only by the way. Stand aside, and freely let these frictions come. You feel the frictions only when you are in the current of the world, but when you are outside of it simply as a witness and as a student, you will be able to see that there are millions and millions of channels in which God is manifesting Himself as Love.

“Wherever there is any bliss, even though in the most sensual of things, there is a spark of.that Eternal Bliss which is the Lord Himself.” Even in the lowest kinds of attraction there is the germ of. divine love. One of the names of the Lord in Sanskrit is Hari, and this means that He attracts all things to Himself. His is in fact the only attraction worthy of human hearts. Who can attract a soul really? Only He! Do you think dead matter can truly attract the soul? It never did, and never will. When you see a man going after a beautiful face, do, you think that it is the handful of arranged material molecules which really attracts the man? Not at all. Behind those material particles there must be and is the play of divine influence and divine love. The ignorant, man does not know it; but yet, consciously or unconsciously, he is attracted by it and it alone. So even the lowest forms of attraction derive their power from God Himself. “None, O beloved, ever loved the husband for the husband’s sake; it is the Âtman, the Lord who is within, for whose sake the husband is loved.” Loving wives may know this or they may not; it is true all the same. “None, O beloved, ever loved the wife for the wife's sake, but it is the Self in the wife that is loved.” Similarly, no one loves a child or anything else in the world except on account of Him who is within. The Lord is the great magnet, and we are all like iron filings; we are being constantly attracted by Him, and all of us are struggling to reach Him. All this struggling of ours in this world is surely not intended for selfish ends. Fools do not know what they are doing: the work of their life is, after all, to approach the great magnet. All the tremendous struggling and fighting in life is intended to make us go to Him ultimately and be one with Him.

The Bhakti-Yogi, however, knows the meaning of life's struggles; he understands it. He has passed through a long series of these struggles, and knows what they mean, and earnestly desires to be free from the friction thereof; he wants to avoid the clash and go direct to the centre of all attraction, the great Hari. This is the renunciation of the Bhakta: this mighty attraction in the direction of God makes all other attraction vanish for him; this mighty infinite love of God which enters his heart leaves no place for any other love to live there. How can it be otherwise? Bhakti fills his heart with the divine waters of the ocean of love, which is God Himself; there is no place there for little loves. That is to say, the Bhakta's renunciation is that Vairagya, or non-attachment for all things, that are not God, which results from Anuraga or great attachment to God.

This is the ideal preparation for the attainment of the supreme Bhakti. When this renunciation comes, the gate opens for the soul to pass through and reach the lofty regions of Supreme Devotion or Para-Bhakti. Then it is that we begin to understand what Para-Bhakti is; and the man who has entered into the inner shrine of the Para-Bhakti, alone has the right to say that all forms and symbols are useless to him as aids to religious realisation. He alone has attained. that supreme state of love commonly called the brotherhood of man; the rest only talk. He sees no distinctions; the mighty ocean of love has entered Into hIm, and he sees not man in man, but beholds his Beloved everywhere. Through every face shines to him his Hari. The light in the sun or the moon is all His manifestation. Wherever there is beauty or sublimity, to him it is all His. Such Bhaktas are still living; the world is

never without them. Such, though bitten by a serpent, only say that a messenger came to them from their Beloved. Such men alone have the right to talk of universal brotherhood. They feel no resentment; their minds never react in the form of hatred or jealousy. The external, the sensuous; has vanished from them for ever. How can they be angry when, through their love, they are always able to see the Reality behind the scenes ?

THE NATURALNESS OF BHAKTI-YOGA AND ITS CENTRAL SE'CRET

"Those who with constant attention always worship You, and those who worship the Undifferentiated, the Absolute—of these who are the greater Yogis?"—Arjuna asked of Shri Krishna. The answer was: "Those who concentrating their minds on Me worship Me with eternal constancy, and are endowed with the highest faith—they are My best worshippers, they are the greatest Yogis. Those that worship the Absolute, the Indescribable, the Undifferentiated, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the All-comprehending, the Immovable, and the Eternal, by controlling the play of their organs and having the conviction of sameness in regard to all things, they also, being engaged in doing good to all beings, come to Me alone. But to those whose minds have been devoted to the unmanifested Absolute, the difficulty of the struggle along the way is much greater, for it is indeed with great difficulty that the path of the unmanifested Absolute is trodden by any embodied being. Those who, having offered up all their work unto Me, with entire reliance on Me, meditate on Me and worship Me without any attachment to anything else—them, I soon lift up from the ocean of ever-recurring births and deaths, as their mind is wholly attached to Me." Jnana-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga are both referred to here. Both may be said to have been defined in the above passage. Jnana-Yoga is grand; it is high philosophy; and almost every human being thinks, curiously enough, that he can surely do every-

thing required of him by philosophy; but it is really very difficult to live truly the life of philosophy. We are often apt to run into great dangers in trying to guide our life by philosophy. This world may be said to be divided between persons of demoniacal nature who think the care-taking of the body to be the be-all and the end-all of existence, and persons of godly nature who realise that the body is simply a means to an end, an instrument intended for the culture of the soul. The devil can and indeed does quote the scriptures for his own purpose ; and thus the way of knowle.dge appears to offer justification to. what the bad man does. as much as it offers inducements to what the good man does. This is the great danger in Jnana-Yoga. But Bhakti-Yoga is natural, sweet, and gentle; the Bhakta does not take such high flights as the Jnana-Yogi, and, iherefore, he is. not apt to have such big falls. Until the bondages of the soul pass away, it cannot of course be free, whatever may be the nature of the path that the religious man takes. Here is a passage showing how, in the case of one of the blessed Gopis, the soul-binding chains of both merit and demerit were broken. “The intense pleasure in meditating on God took away the binding effects of her good deeds. Then her intense misery of soul in not attaining unto Him washed off all her sinful propensities; and then she became free.” (*Vishnu-Purâna*).

तच्चिन्ताविपुलाह्लादक्षीणपुरातचया तघा ।

तदप्राप्तिमहद्दुः खविल्नीरनशेषपातका ॥

...निरुच्छासतया मुक्तिं गतान्या गोपकन्यका ॥

In Bhakti-Yoga the central secret is, therefore, to know that the various passions, and feelings, and emotions in the human heart are not wrong in themselves; only they have to be carefully controlled and given a higher and higher direction, until they attain the very highest condition of excellence. The highest direction is that which takes us to God; every other direction is lower. We find that pleasures and pains are very common and oft-recurring feelings in our lives. When a man feels pain, because he has not wealth or some such worldly thing, he is giving a wrong direction to the feeling. Still, pain has its uses. Let a man feel pain that he has not reached the Highest, that he has not reached God, and that pain will be to his salvation. When you become glad that you have a handful of coins, it is a wrong direction given to the faculty of joy; it should be given a higher direction, it must be made to serve the Highest Ideal. Pleasure in that kind of ideal must surely be our highest joy. This same thing is true of all our other feelings. The Bhakta says that not one of them is wrong, he gets hold of them all and points them unfailingly towards God.

THE FORMS OF LOVE-MANIFESTATION

Here are some of the forms in which love manifests itself. First there is reverence. Why do people show reverence to temples and holy places? Because He is worshipped there, and His presence is associated with all such places. Why do people in every country pay reverence to teachers of religion? It is natural for the hunlan heart to do so, because all such teachers preach the Lord. At bottom, reverence is a growth out of love; we can none of us revere him whom we do not love. Then comes Priti—pleasure in God. What an immense pleasure men take in the objects of the senses! They go anywhere, run through any danger, to get the thing which they love, the thing which their senses like. What is wanted of the Bhakta is this very kind of intense love which has, however, to be directed to God. Then there is the sweetest of pains, Viraha, the intense misery due to the absence of the beloved. When a man feels intense misery because he has not attained to God, has not known that which is the only thing worthy to be known, and becomes in consequence very dissatisfied and almost mad—then there is Viraha ; and this state of the mind makes him feel disturbed in the presence of anything other than the beloved (एकरतियिचिकित्सा). In earthly love we see how often this Viraha comes. Again, when men are really and intensely in love with women, or women with men, they feel a kind of natural annoyance in the presence of all those whom they do not love. Exactly the same state of impatience, in regard to things that are not loved, comes to

the mind when Para-Bhakti holds sway over it; even to talk about things other than God becomes distasteful then. "Think of Him, think of Him alone, and give up all other vain words" (अन्या वाचो विमुं चथ). Those who talk of Him alone, the Bhakta finds to be friendly to him; while those who talk of anything else appear to him to be unfriendly. A still higher stage of love is reached when life itself is maintained for the sake of the one Ideal of Love, when life itself is considered beautiful and worth living only on account of that Love (तदर्थप्राणसंस्थान). Without it, such a life would not remain even for a moment. Life is sweet because it thinks of the Beloved. Tadiyata (तदीयता = "*His-ness*") comes when a man becomes perfect according to Bhakti—when he has become blessed, when he has attained God, when he has touched the feet of God, as it were. Then his whole nature is purified and completely changed. All his purpose in life then becomes fulfilled. Yet many such Bhaktas live on just to worship Him. That is the bliss, the only pleasure in life, which they will not give up. "Oh king, such is the blessed quality of Hari that even those, who have become satisfied with everything, all the knots of whose hearts have been cut asunder, even they love the Lord for love's sake"—the Lord "Whom all the gods worship, all the lovers of liberation, and all the knowers of the Brahman" यं सर्वे देवा नमस्यन्ति मुमुक्षवो ब्रह्मवादिनश्चेति (*Nri. Tap. Up.*) Such is the power of love. When a man has forgotten himself altogether and does not feel that ahything belongs to him, then he acquires the state of Tadiyata; everything is sacred to him, because it belongs to the Beloved. Even in regard to earthly love, the lover thinks that everything belonging to his

beloved is sacred and so dear to him. He loves even a piece of the cloth belonging to the darling of his heart. In the same way, when a person loves the Lord, the whole universe becomes dear to him, because it is all His.

UNIVERSAL LOVE AND HOW IT LEADS TO SELF-SURRENDER

How can we love the Vyashti, the particular, without first loving the Samashti, the universal? God is the Samashti, the generalised and the abstract universal whole; and the universe that we see is the Vyashti, the particularised thing. To love the whole universe is possible only by way of loving the Samashti—the universal—which is, as it were, the one unity in which are to be found millions and millions of smaller unities. The philosophers of India do. not stop I at the particulars; they cast a hurried glance at the particulars, and immediately start to find the generalised forms whieh will include all the particulars. The search after the universal is the one search of Indian philosophy and religion. The Jnâni aims at the wholeness of things, at that one absolute and generalised Being, knowing which he knows everything. The Bhakta wishes to realise that one generalised abstract Person in loving whom he loves the whole universe. The Yogi wishes to have possession of that one generalised form of power, by controlling which he controls this whole universe. The Indian mind, throughout its history, has been directed to this kind of singular search after the universal in everything—in science, in psychology, in love, in philosophy. So the conclusion to which the Bhakta comes is, that, if you go on merely loving one person after another, you may go on loving them so for an infinite length of time, without being in the least able to love the world as a whole.

When, at last, the central idea is, however, arrived at, that the sum total of all love is God, that the sum total of the aspirations of all the souls in the universe, whether they be free, or bound, or struggling towards liberation, is God, then alone it becomes possible for anyone to put forth universal love. God is the Samashti, and this visible universe is God differentiated and made manifest. If we love this sum total, we love everything. Loving the world and doing it good will all come easily then; we have to obtain this power only by loving God first; otherwise it is no joke to do good to the world. "Everything is His and He is my Lover; I love Him," says the Bhakta. In this way everything becomes sacred to the Bhakta, because all things are His. All are His children, His body, His manifestation. How then may we hurt any one? How then may we not love anyone? With the love of God will come, as a sure effect, the love of everyone in the universe. The nearer we approach God, the more do we begin to see that all things are in Him. When the soul succeeds in appropriating the bliss of this supreme love, it also begins to see Him in everything. Our heart will thus become an eternal fountain of love. And when we reach even higher states of this love, all the little differences between the things of the world are entirely lost; man is seen no more as man, but only as God; the animal is seen no more as animal, but as God; even the tiger is no more a tiger but manifestation of God. Thus in this intense state of Bhakti, worship is offered to every one, to every life, and to every being.

एवं सर्वेषु ूतेषु भक्तिरव्यभिचरिणी।

कर्तव्या पप्डितै र्ज्ञात्वा सर्बभूतमयं हरिम्॥

—"Knowing that Hari, the Lord, is in every being, the wise have thus to manifest unswerving love towards all beings." As a result of this kind of intense, all-absorbing love, comes the feeling of perfect self-surrender, the conviction that nothing that happens is against us—(Aprâtikulya). Thcn the loving soul is able to say, if pain comes, "Welcome pain." If misery comes, it will say, "Welcome misery, you are also from the Beloved." If a serpent comes, it will say, "Welcome serpent." If death comes, such a Bhakta will wekome it with a smile. "Blessed am I that they all come to me; they are all welcome." The Bhakta in this state of perfect resignation, arising out of intense love to God and to all that are His, ceases to distinguish between pleasure and pain in so far as they affect him. He does not know what it is to complain of pain or misery; and this kind of uncomplaining resignation to the will of God, who is all love, is indeed a worthier acquisition than all the glory of grand and heroic performances.

To the vast majority of mankind, the body is everything; the body is all the universe to them; bodily enjoyment is their all in all. This demon of the worship of the body and of the things of the body has entered into us all. We may indulge in tall talk, and take very high flights, but we are like vultures all the same; our mind is directed to the piece of carrion down below. Why should our body be saved, say, from the tiger? Why may we not give it over to the tiger? The tiger will thereby be pleased, and that is not altogether so very far from self-sacrifice and worship. Can you reach the realisation of such an idea in which all sense of self is completely lost? It is a very dizzy height on the pinnacle of the religion of love, and few in this world have ever climbed

up to it; but until a man reaches that highest point of ever-ready and ever-willing self-sacrifice, he cannot become a perfect Bhakta. We may all manage to maintain our bodies more or less satisfactorily and for longer or shorter intervals of time. Nevertheless, our bodies have to go; there is no permanence about them. Blessed are they whose bodies get destroyed in the service of others. “Wealth, and even life itself, the sage always holds ready for the service of others. In this world, there being one thing certain, *viz*. death, it is far better that this body dies in a good cause than in a bad one.” We may drag our life on for fifty years or a hundred years; but after that, what is it that happens? Everything that is the result of combination must get dissolved and die. There must and will come a time for it to be decomposed. Jesus and Buddha. and Mohammed are all dead; all the great Prophets and Teachers of the world are dead. “In this evanescent world, where everything is falling to pieces, we have to make the highest use of what time we have,” says the Bhakta; and really the highest use of life is to hold it at the service of all beings. It is the horrible body-idea that breeds all the selfishness in the world, just this one delusion that we are wholly the body we own, and that we must by all possible means try our very best to preserve and to please it. If you know that you are positively other than your body, you have then none to fight with or struggle against; you are dead to all ideas of selfishness. So the Bhakta declares that we have to hold ourselves as if we are altogether dead to all the things of the world; and that is indeed self-surrender. Let things come as they may. This is the meaning of “Thy will be done”; not going about fighting and struggling and thinking

all the while that God wills all our own weaknesses and worldly ambitions. It may be that good comes even out of our selfish struggles; that is, however, God's look-out. The perfected Bhakta's idea must be never to will and work for himself. "Lord, they build high temples in Your name; they make large gifts in Your name; I am poor; I have nothing; so I take this body of mine and place it at Your feet. Do not give me up, O Lord." Such is the prayer proceeding out of the depths of the Bhakta's heart. To him who has experienced it, this eternal sacrifice of the self unto the Beloved Lord is higher by far than all wealth and power, than even all soaring thoughts of renown and enjoyment. The peace of the Bhakta's calm resignation is a peace that passeth all understanding, and is of incomparable yalue. His Aprâtikulya is a state of the mind in which it has no interests, and naturally knows nothing that is opposed to it. In this state of sublime resignation everything in the shape of attachment goes away completely, except that one all-absorbing love to Him in whom all things live and move and have their being. This attachment of love to God is indeed one that does not bind the soul but effectively breaks all its bondages.

THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE AND THE HIGHER LOVE ARE ONE TO THE TRUE LOVER

The Upanishads distinguish between a higher knowledge and a lower knowledge; and to the Bhakta there is really no dfference between this higher knowledge and his higher love (Parâ-Bhakti). The Mundaka Upanishad says: इे विद्ये वेदितवये इति ह सम यहह्मविदो वदनित। परा चैवापरा च॥ तत्रापरा ऋग्वेदी यजुर्वेदः सामवेदीऽथर्ववेदः शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दोज्योतिषमिति। अथ परा यया तदक्षरमथिगम्यते॥—"The knowers of Brahman declare that there are two kinds of knowledge worthy to be known. namely, the Higher (Parâ) and the Lower (Aparâ). Of these the Lower (knowledge) consists of the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Sâmaveda, the Atharvaveda, the Shikshâ (or the science dealing with pronunciation and accent), the Kalpa (or the sacrificial liturgy), Grammar, the Nirukta (or the science dealing with etymology and the meaning of words), Prosody, and Astronomy; and the Higher (knowledge) is that by which that unchangeable is known." The higher knowledge is thus clearly shown to be the knowledge of Brahman: and the *Devi-Bhâgavata* gives us the following definition of the higher love (Parâ-Bhakti):—"As oil poured from one vessel to another falls in an unbroken line, so, when the mind in an unbroken stream thinks of the Lord, we have what is called Para-Bhakti or supreme love." This kind of undisturbed and ever steady direction of the mind and the heart to the Lord with an inseparable attactment is indeed the highest

manifestation of man’s love to God. All other forms of Bhakti are only preparatory to the attainment of this highest form thereof, *viz*. the Parâ-Bhakti which is also known as the love that comes after attachment (Râgânugâ). When this supreme love once comes into the heart of man, his mind will continuously think of God and remember nothing else. He will give no room in himself to thoughts other than those of God, and his soul will be unconquerably pure, and will alone break all the bonds of mind and matter and become serenely free. He alone can worship the Lord in his own heart; to him, forms, symbols, books, and doctrines are all unnecessary and are incapable of proving serviceable in any way. It is not easy to love the Lord thus. Ordinarily human love is seen to flourish only in places where it is returned; where love is not returned for love, cold indifference is the natural result. There are, however, rare instances in which we may notice love exhibiting itself even where there is no return of love. We may compare this kind of love, for purposes of illustration, to the love of the moth for the fire; the insect loves the fire, falls into it and dies. It is indeed in the nature of this insect to love so. To love, because it is the nature of love to love, is undeniably the highest and the most unselfish manifestation of love that may be seen in the world. Such love working itself out on the plane of spirituality necessarily leads to the attainment of Para-Bhakti.

THE TRIANGLE OF LOVE

We may represent love as a triangle, each of the angles of which corresponds to one of its inseparable characteristics. There can be no triangle without all its three angles; and there can be no true love without its three following characteristics. The first angle of our triangle of love is, that love knows no bargaining. Wherever there is any seeking for something in return, there can be no real love; it becomes a mere matter of shopkeeping, As long as there is in us any idea of deriving this or that favour from God in return for our respect and allegiance to Him, so long there can be no true love growing in our hearts. Those who worship God because they wish Him to bestow favours on them, are sure not to worship Him, if those favours are not forthcoming. The Bhakta loves the Lord because He is lovable; there is no other motive originating or directing this divine emotion of the true devotee. We have heard it said that a great king once went into a forest and there met a sage. He talked with the sage a little and was very much pleased with his purity and wisdom. The king then wanted the sage to oblige him by receiving a present from him. The sage refused to do so, saying, “The fruits of the forest are enough food for me; the pure streams of water flowing down from the mountains give enough of drink for me; the barks of the trees supply me with enough of covering; and the caves of the mountains form my home. Why Should I take any present from you or from anybody?” The king said, “Just to benefit me, sir, please take something from

my hands, and please come with me to the city and to my palace." After much persuasion, the sage at last consented to do as the king desired and went with him to his palace. Before offering the gift to the sage the king repeated his prayers, saying, "Lord, give me more children; Lord, give me more wealth; Lord, give me more territory ; Lord, keep my body in better health," and so on. Before the king finished saying his prayer, the sage had got up and walked away from the room quietly. At this the king became perplexed and began to follow him, crying aloud, "Sir, you are going away, you have not received my gifts." The sage turned round to him and said, "I do not beg of beggars. You are yourself nothing but a beggar; and how can you give me anything? I am no fool to think of taking anything from a beggar like you. Go away, do not follow me." There is well brought out the distinction between mere beggars and the real lovers of God. Begging is not the language of love. To worship God even for the sake of salvation or any other reward is equally degenerate. Love knows no reward. Love is always for love's sake. The Bhakta loves because he cannot help loving. When you see a beautiful scenery and fall in love with it, you do not demand anything in the way of favour from the scenery; nor does the scenery demand anything from you. Yet the vision thereof brings you to a blissful state of the mind, it tones down all the friction in your soul, it makes you calm, almost raises you, for the time being, beyond your mortal nature, and places you in a condition of quite divine ecstasy. This nature of real love is the first angle of our triangle. Ask not anything in return for your love; let your position be always

that of the giver; give your love unto God, but do not ask anything in return even from Him.

The second angle of the triangle of love is, that love knows no fear. Those that love God through fear are the lowest of human beings, quite undeveloped as men. They worship God from fear of pumshment. He is a great being to them, with a whip in one hand and the sceptre in the other; if they do not obey Him they are afraid they will be whipped. It is a degradation to worship God through fear of punishment; such worship is, if worship at all, the crudest form of the worship of love. o long as there is any fear in the heart, how can there he love also? Love conquers naturally all fear. Think of a young mother in the street, and a dog barking at her; she is frightened, and flies into the nearest house. But suppose, the next day, she is in the street with her child, and a lion springs upon the child. Where will be her position now? Of course, in the very mouth of the lion, protecting her child. Love conquers all fear. Fear comes from the selfish idea of cutting one's self off from the universe. The smaller and the more selfish I make myself, the more is my fear. If a man thinks he is a little nothing, fear will surely come upon him. And the less you think of yourself as an insignificant person, the less fear will there be for you. So long as there is the least spark of fear in you, there can be no love there. Love and fear are incompatible; God is never to be feared by those who love Him. The commandment, “Do not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” the true lover of God laughs at. How can there be any blasphemy in the religion of love? The more you take the name of the

Lord, the better for you, in whatever way you may do it. You are only repeating His name because you love Him.

The third angle of the love-triangle is, that love knows no rival, for in it is always embodied the lover's highest ideal. True love never comes until the object of our love becomes to us our highest Ideal. It may be that In many cases human rove is misdirected and misplaced, but to the person who loves, the thing he loves is always his own highest ideal. One may see his ideal in the vilest of beings, and another in the highest of beings; nevertheless, in every case it is the ideal alone that can be truly and intensely loved. The highest ideal of every man is called God. Ignorant or wise, saint or sinner, man or woman, educated or uneducated, cultivated or uncultivated, to every human being the highest ideal is God. The synthesis of all the highest ideals of beauty, of sublimity, and of power gives us the completest conception of the loving and lovable God. These Ideals exist, in some shape or other, in every mind naturally; they form a part and parcel of all our minds. All the active manifestations of human nature are struggles of those ideals to become realised in practical life. All the various movements that we see around us in society are caused, by the various ideals in various souls trying to come out and become concretised; what is inside presses on to come outside. This perennially dominant influence of the ideal is the one force, the one motive power, that may be seen to be constantly working in the midst of mankind. It may be after hundreds of births after struggling through thousands of years, that man finds that it is vain to try to make the inner ideal mould completely the external conditions and square well with them; after realising

this he. no more tries to project his own ideal on the outside world, but worships the ideal itself as ideal, from the highest standpoint of love. This ideally perfect ideal embraces all lower ideals. Everyone admits the truth of the saying that a lover sees Helen's beauty on an Ethiop's brow. The man who is standing aside as a looker-on sees that love is here misplaced, but the lover sees his Helen all the same, and does not see the Ethiop at all. Helen or Ethiop, the objects of our love are really the centres round which our ideals become crystallised. What is it that the world commonly worships? Not certainly this all-embracing, ideally perfect ideal of the supreme devotee and lover. That ideal which men and women commonly worship is what is in themselves; every person projects his or her own ideal on the outside world and kneels before it. That is why we find that men who are cruel and blood-thirsty conceive of a blood-thirsty God, because they can only love their own highest ideal. That is why good men have a very high ideal of God; and their ideal is indeed so very different from that of others.

THE GOD OF LOVE IS HIS OWN PROOF

What is the ideal of the lover who has quite passed beyond beyond the idea of selfishness, of bartering and bargaining, and who knows no fear? Even to the great God such a man will say, "I will give You my all, and I do not want anything from You; indeed there is nothing that I can call my own." When a man has acquired this conviction, his ideal becomes one of perfect love, one of perfect fearlessness of love. The highest ideal of such a person has no narrowness of particularity about it; it is love universal, love without limits and bonds, love itself, absolute love. This grand ideal of the religion of love is worshipped and loved absolutely as such without the aid of any symbols or suggestions. This is the highest form of Para-Bhakti, the worship of such an all-comprehending ideal as the ideal; all the other forms of Bhakti are only stages on the way to reach it. All our failures and all our successes in following the religion of love are on the road to the reallsatlon of that one ideal. Object after object is taken up, and the inner ideal is successively projected on them all; and all such external objects are found inadequate as exponents of the ever-expanding inner ideal, and are naturally rejected one after another. At last the aspirant begins to think that it is vain to try to realise the ideal in external objects, that all external objects are as nothing when compared with the ideal itself; and, in course of time, he acquires the power of realising the highest and the most generalised abstract ideal entirely as an

abstraction that is to him quite alive and real. When the devotee has reached this point, he is no more impelled to ask whether God can be demonstrated or not, whether He is omnipotent and omniscient or not. To him He is only the God of Love: He is the highest ideal of love, and that is sufficient for all his purposes; He, as love, is self-evident; it requires no proofs to demonstrate the existence of the beloved to the lover. The magistrate-Gods of other forms of religion may require a good deal of proof to prove Them; but the Bhakta does pot and cannot think of such Gods at all. To him God exists entirely as love. “None, O beloved, loves the husband for the husband’s sake, but it is for the sake of the Self who is in the husband that the husband is loved; none, O beloved, loves the wife for the wife’s sake, but it is for the sake of the Self who is in the wife that the wife is loved.” It is said by some that selfishness is the only motive power in regard to all human activities. That also is love lowered by being particularised. When I think of myself as comprehending the Universal, there can surely be no selfishness in me; but when I, by mistake, think that I am a little something, my love becomes particularised and narrowed. The mistake consists in making the sphere of love narrow and contracted. All things in the universe are of divine origin and deserve to be loved; it has, however, to be borne in mind that the love of the whole includes the love of the parts. This whole is the God of the Bhaktas and all the other Gods, Fathers in Heaven, or Rulers, or Creators, and all theories and doctrines and books have no purpose and no meaning for them, seeing that they have, through their supreme love and devotion, risen above those things

altogether. When the heart is purified and cleansed and filled to the brim with the divine nectar of love, all other ideas of God become simply puerile, and are rejected as being inadequate or unworthy. Such is indeed the power of Para-Bhakti or Supreme Love; and the perfected Bhakta no more goes to see God in temples and churches; he knows no place where he will not find Him. He finds Him in the temple as well as out of the temple; he finds Him in the saint's saintliness as well as in the wicked man's wickedness, because he has Him already seated in glory in his own heart, as the one Almighty, inextinguishable Light of Love, which is ever shining and eternally present.

HUMAN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DIVINE IDEAL OF LOVE

It is impossible to express the nature of this supreme and absolute ideal of love in human language. Even the highest flight of human imagination is incapable of comprehending it in all its infinite perfection and beauty. Nevertheless, the followers of the religion of love, in its .higher as well as its lower forms, in all countries, have all along had to use the inadequate human language to comprehend and to define their own ideal of love. Nay more; human love itself, in all its varied forms, has been made to typify this inexpressible divine love. Man can think of divine things only in his own human way; to us the Absolute can be expressed only in our relative language. The whole universe is to us a writing of the Infinite in the language of the finite. Therefore Bhaktas make use of all the common i terms associated with the common love of humanity in relation to God and His worship through love. Some of the great writers on Para-Bhakti have tried to understand and experience this divine love in so many different ways. The lowest form in which this love is apprehended is what they call the peaceful—the Shânta (शान्त). When a man worships God without the fire of love in him, without its madness in his brain, when his love is just the calm commonplace love, a little higher than mere forms and ceremonies and symbols, but not at all characterised by the madness of intensely active love, it is said to be Shânta. We see some people in the world who

like to move on slowly, and others who come and go like the whirlwind. The Shânta-Bhakta is calm, peaceful, gentle. The next higher type is that of Dâsya (दास्य) i.e. servantship; it comes when a man thinks he is the servant of the Lord. The attachment of the faithful servant unto the master is his ideal.

The next type of love is Sakhya (सख्य), friendship—"Thou art our beloved friend." Just as a man opens his heart to his friend and knows that the friend will never chide him for his faults, but will always try to help him, just as there is the idea of equality between him and his friend, so equal love flows in and out between the worshipper and his friendly God. Thus God becomes our friend, the friend who is near, the friend to whom we may freely tell all the tales of our lives! The innermost secrets of .our hearts we may place before Him with the great assurance of safety and support; He is the friend whom the devotee accepts as an equal; God is viewed here as our playmate. We may well say that we are all playing in this universe. Just as children play their games, just as the most glorious kings and emperors play their own games, so is the Beloved Lord Himself in sport with this universe. He is perfect; He does not want anything. Why should He create? Activity is always with us for the fulfilment of a certain want, and want always presupposes imperfection. God is perfect; He has no wants. Why should He go on with this work of an ever-active creation? What purpose has He in view? The stories about God creating this world, for some end or other that we imagine, are good as stories, but not otherwise. It is all really in sport; the universe is His play going on. The whole universe must, after all, be a big piece of pleasing fun to Him. If you are

poor, enjoy that as fun; if you are rich, enjoy the fun of being rich; if dangers come, it is also good fun; if happiness comes, there is more good fun. The world is just a playground; and we are here having good fun, having a game; and God is with us playing all the while; and we are with Him playing. God is our eternal playmate. How beautifully He is playing! The play is finished; when the cycle comes to an end. There is rest for a shorter or longer time, again all come out and play. It is only when you forget that it is all play, and that you are also helping in the play, it is only then that misery and sorrows come; then the heart becomes heavy, then the word weighs upon you with tremendous power ; but as soon as you give up the serious idea of reality as the characteristic of the changing incidents of the three minutes of life, and know it to be but a stage on which we are playing, helping Him to play, at once misery ceases for you. He plays in every atom; He is playing when He is building up earths, and suns, and moons; He is playing with the human heart, with animals, with plants. We are His chess-men; He puts the chessmen on the board, and shakes them up. He arranges us first in one way and then in another, and we are consciously or unconsciously helping in His play. And Oh bliss! we are His playmates!

The next is what is known as Vatsalya (वात्सल्य), loving God not as our father but as our child. This may look peculiar, but it is a discipline to enable us to detach all ideas of power from the concept of God. The idea of power brings with it awe. There should be no awe in love. The ideas of reverence and obedience are necessary for the formation of character, but when character is formed, when the lover has tasted the calm, peaceful love, and tasted also a little of its

intense madness, then he need talk no more of ethics and discipline. To conceive God as mighty, majestic, and glorious, as the Lord of the universe, or as the God of gods, the lover says he does not care. It is to avoid this association with God of the fear-creating sense of power, that he worships God as his own child. The mother and the father are not moved by awe in relation to the child; they cannot have any reverence for the child. They cannot think of asking any favour from the child. The child's position is always that of the receiver, and out of love for the child the parents will give up their bodies a hundred times over. A thousand lives they will sacrifice for that one child of theirs. and therefore God is loved as a child. This idea of loving God as a child comes into existence and grows naturally among those religious sects which believe in the incarnation of God. For the Mohammedan it is Impossible to have this idea of God as a child; they will shrink from it with a kind of horror. But the Christian and the Hindu can realise it easily, because they have the baby Jesus. and the baby Krishna. The women in India often look upon themselves as Krishna's mother; Christian mothers also may take up the idea that they are Christ's mother, and it will bring to the West the knowledge of God's Divine Motherhood which they so much need. The superstitions of awe and reverence in relation to God are deeply rooted in the heart of our hearts, and it takes long years to sink entirely in love our ideas of reverence and veneration, of awe and majesty and glory with regard to God.

There is one more human representation of the divine ideal of love. It is known as Madhura (मधुर), sweet, and is the highest of all such representations. It is indeed based on

the highest manifestation of love in this world, and this love is also the strongest known to man. What love shakes the whole nature of man, what love runs through every atom of his being, makes him mad, makes him forget his own nature, transforms him, makes him either a god or a demon, as the love between man and woman? In this sweet representation of divine love God is our husband. We are all women; there are no men in this world; there is but One Man, and that is He, our Beloved. All that love which man gives to woman, or woman to man, has here to be given up to the Lord. All the different kinds of love which we see in the world, and with which we are more or less playing merely, have God as the one goal; but unfortunately, man does not know the infinite ocean into which this mighty river of love is constantly flowing; and, foolishly, he often tries to direct it to little dolls of human beings. The tremendous love for the child that is in human nature is not for the little doll of a child; if you bestow it blindly and exclusively on the child, you will suffer in consequence; but through such suffering will come the awakening by which you are sure to find out that the love which is in you, if it is given to any human being, will sooner or later bring pain and sorrow as the result. Our love must, therefore, be given to the Highest One, who never dies and who never changes—to Him, in the ocean of whose love there is neither ebb nor flow. Love must get to its right destination, it must go unto Him who is really the infinite ocean of love. All rivers flow into the ocean. Even the drop of water coming down from the mountain-side cannot stop its course after reaching a brook or a river, however big it may be; at last even that drop somehow does find its way to the ocean. God is the one goal of all our passions and emotions. If you want

to be angry, be angry with Him. Chide your Beloved, chide your Friend. Whom else can you safely chide? Mortal man will not patiently put up with your anger; there will be a reaction. If you are angry with me, I am sure quickly to react, because I cannot patiently put up with your anger. Say unto the Beloved, "Why do You not come to me: why do You leave me thus alone?" Where is there any enjoyment but in Him? What enjoyment can there be in little clods of earth? It is the crystallised essence of infinite enjoyment that we have to seek, and that is in God. Let all our passions and emotions go up unto Him. They are meant for Him, for if they miss their mark and go lower, they become vile; and when they go straight to the mark, to the Lord, even the lowest of them becomes transfigured; all the energies of the human body and mind, howsoever they may express themselves, have the Lord as their one goal, as their Ekâyana. All loves and all passions of the human heart must go to God. He is the Beloved; whom else can this heart love? He is the most beautiful, the most sublime. He is beauty itself, sublimity itself. Who in this universe is more beautiful than He? Who in this universe is more fit to become the husband than He? Who in this universe is fitter to be loved than He? So let Him be the husband, let Him be the Beloved. Often it so happens that divine lovers who sing of this divine love accept the language of human love in all its aspects as adequate to describe it. Fools do not under-stand this; they never will. They look at it only with the physical eye. They do not understand the mad throes of this spiritual love. How can they? "For one kiss of Thy lips, O Beloved! One who has been kissed by Thee, has his thirst for Thee increasing for ever, all his sorrows vanish, and he forgets all

things except Thee alone." Aspire after that kiss of the Beloved, that touch of His lips which makes the Bhakta mad, which makes of man a god. To him, who has been blessed with such a kiss, the whole of nature changes, worlds vanish, suns and moons die out, and the universe itself melts away into that one infinite ocean of love. That is the perfection of the madness of love. Aye; the true spiritual lover does not rest even there; even the love of husband and wife is not mad enough for him. The Bhaktas take up also the idea of illegitimate love, because it is so strong; the impropriety of it is not at all the thing they have in view. The nature of this love is such that the more obstructions there are for its free play, the more passionate it becomes. The love between husband and wife is smooth, there are no obstructions there. So the Bhaktas take up the idea of a girl who is in love with her own beloved, and her mother or father or husband objects to such love; and the more anybody obstructs the course of her love, so much the more is her love tending to grow in strength.

Human language cannot describe how Krishna in the groves of Vrindâ was madly loved, how at the sound of his voice the ever-blessed Gopis rushed out to meet him, forgetting everything, forgetting this world and its ties, its duties, its joys, and its sorrows. Man, O man, you speak of divine love and at the same time are able to attend to all the vanities of this world-are you sincere? "Where Râma is, there is no room for any desire;—where desire is, there is no room for Râma; these never co-exist—like light and darkness they are never together."

CONCLUSION

When this highest ideal of love is reached, philosophy is thrown away; who will then care for it? Freedom, salvation, Nirvâna—all are thrown away; who cares to become free while in the enjoyment of divine love? "Lord, I do not want wealth, nor friends, nor beauty, nor learning, nor even freedom; let me be born again and again, and be Thou ever my Love. Be Thou ever and ever my Love." "Who cares to become sugar," says the Bhakta, "I want to taste sugar." Who will then desire to become free and one with God?" I may know that I am He, yet will I take myself away from Him and become different, so that I may enjoy the Beloved." That is what the Bhakta says. Love for love's sake is his highest enjoyment. Who will not be bound hand and foot a thousand times over to enjoy the Beloved? No Bhakta cares for anything except love, except to love and to be loved. His unworldly love is like the tide rushing up the river; this lover goes up the river, against the current. The world calls him mad. I know one whom the world used to call mad, and this was his answer: "My friends, the whole world is a lunatic asylum; some are mad after worldly love, some after name, some after fame, some after money, some after salvation and going to heaven. In this big lunatic asylum I am also mad, I am mad after God. If you are mad after money, I am mad after God. You are mad; so am I. I think my madness is after all the best." The true Bhakta's love is this burning madness, before which everything else vanishes for him.

The whole universe is to him full of love and love alone; that is how it seems to the lover. So when a man has this love in him, he becomes eternally blessed, eternally happy; this blessed madness of divine love alone can cure for ever the disease of the world that is in us. With desire, selfishness has vanished. He has drawn near to God, he has thrown off all those vain desires of which he was full before,

We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love. God is to us a separate Being, and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle, and man begins to approach God, and God also comes nearer and nearer to man: Man takes up all the various relationships of life—as father, as mother, as son, as friend, as master, as lover—and projects them on his ideal of love, on his God. To him God exists as all these; and the last point of his progress is reached when he feels that he has become absolutely merged in the object of his worship. We all begin with love for ourselves, and the unfair claims of the little self make even love selfish; at last, however, comes the full blaze of light in which this little self is seen, to have become one with the Infinite. Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this Light of Love, and he realises at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover, and the Beloved are One.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

This electronic edition of *Bhakti-Yoga* was scanned / key-entered and proofed in November 2003 E.V. for Celephaïs Press, from the 1959 edition issued by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta. No attempt has been made to retain the pagination of that edition.

Further proof-reading of the Sanskrit is almost certainly necessary as my knowledge of that language is minimal. This document uses the Sanskrit 98 font from Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas, Rishikesh, India, with a few additions.

Love is the law, love under will.

T.S.